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(80th, Chicago, Illinois, July 30-August 2, 1997):

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Pluralistic Ignorance and Educators in Public Relations: Underestimating Professionalism of Our Educator Peers and of Practitioners In the Field

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Pluralistic Ignorance and Educators in Public Relations: Underestimating Professionalism of Our Educator Peers and of Practitioners In the Field

ABSTRACT: Responding to a battery of 45 items, educators from across the nation erroneously judged the current state of professional standards in the field held by their peers and by practitioners. Educators held their peers in comparatively low esteem and practitioners in lower esteem, viewing others collectively as somewhat naive, unprofessional and unenlightened when compared to their own personal self-images. This state of affairs, described in coorientation theory as pluralistic ignorance, suggests that public relations educators may actually hold higher standards and greater confidence in standards than educators commonly attribute to their peers and to their professional colleagues.

Introduction

Purpose

What do public relations educators think about professional standards in their field? What do they think their educator peers think about professional standards in public relations?

And what do educators think practitioners in the field think? This study seeks to answer these questions by using a coorientation approach in a national survey of public relations educators. It is based on the view that both educators and practitioners in public relations must look inward and define standards of specific performance -- and, borrowing from social projection theory, that professionals in the field must come to consensus on these standards -- to ultimately achieve and maintain professionalism in the field and in the practitioners of tomorrow.

In light of the relative youth of our profession, academic research can serve to nurture ideas and attitudes toward professional practice of public relations. Educators play the key role in preparing the future generations of practitioners to aspire to the high standards which may ultimately win the field the respect it craves and most often deserves. The study of professionalism in public relations must challenge the assumption that professional standards have yet been defined, much less achieved in our field.

Professional Standards Literature

Interdisciplinary guidelines for a "profession" generally include requirements for (1) a well-defined body of scholarly knowledge; (2) completion of some standardized and prescribed course of study; (3) examination and certification by a state; and, (4) oversight by a state agency which has disciplinary powers over practitioners' behaviors (Wylie, 1994). Other criteria include intellectualism, a code of ethics, a comprehensive self-governing organization, greater emphasis on public service than self-interests such as profits, performance of a "unique and essential service based on a substantial body of knowledge," broad autonomy, and "having practitioners guided by altruism" (Wright, 1981, p. 51).

Nelson (1994) offered five major characteristics of professionalism:

* professional values
* membership in professional organizations
* professional norms
* an intellectual tradition
* development of technical skills

These five elements serve to neatly summarize initiatives in our professional organizations, articles in the trade literature (Australia, 1993; Bovet, 1994; Fenton, 1977; Marston, 1968; McKee, Nayman & Lattimore, 1975; Ranney, 1977; St. Helen, 1992; Warner, 1993) and twenty years of academic work on professional standards in public relations (see, for example, Gitter & Jaspers, 1982; Judd, 1989; Rentner & Bissland, 1990; Ryan, 1986; Wright 1978, 1981). The remaining articles in the public relations literature take more of a topical, polemical focus, arguing for or against licensing (Baxter, 1986; Bernays, 1983, 1992, 1993; Forbes, 1986; Lesly, 1986), accreditation and education (Hainsworth, 1993; Wylie, 1994), ethics, and social responsibility (Bivins, 1992; Judd, 1989; Ryan, 1986; Sharpe, 1986), to name just a few. (For a more complete review, see Cameron, Sallot & Weaver-Lariscy, 1996.)

The views offered in the trade literature and the results of empirical studies in the academic literature, suggest a number of facets of professionalism in public relations. Cameron, Sallot and Weaver-Lariscy (1996) set out to gauge how well we are progressing in settling on standards for these facets, reporting mixed results. In a national survey of 251 public relations practitioners in the U.S. assessing the extent to which a standard of professionalism currently exists, respondents were asked to rate 24 professional attributes drawn from the research literature and nearly 200 hours of in-depth interviews with 60 practitioners. Survey respondents tended to view ethical guidelines, accreditation and writing/editing skills as enjoying well established standards. Licensing, location of public relations on the organizational chart and inclusion of public relations in the dominant coalition were viewed as most lacking in a standard of professional performance.

The 24 items representing professional attributes factored into eight dimensions: activities-skills-managing through goals and objectives; salary; research; role in the organization; ethical guidelines; education-training; racial-gender equity; accreditation-licensing. Assessments of professionalism along these eight factors differed significantly as a function of age, education, race and both length and geographic region of practice of public relations.

Weaver-Lariscy, Sallot and Cameron (1996) further reported data that contrasted how men and women in public relations perceive a global standard of justice with how they experience justice issues instrumentally. While there was much agreement that standards are emerging for some issues and practices though not for others, when it comes to justice and equity for all, men and women disagree. The authors concluded that men "see" more justice and equity in the system than women experience, precluding women from viewing "just and equitable" standards in the field. Apparently, such professional standards don't mesh with the female experience in the field.

In an analysis of 45 professional standard items measuring the degree of perceived consensus about professional standards and the accuracy of perceptions of peer professionalism with the same sample of 251 practitioners, Sallot, Cameron and Weaver-Lariscy (1997a) found that public relations professionals across the nation tend to underestimate the current state of professional standards in the field. This state of affairs, described in coorientation theory (Chaffee & McLeod, 1968; Kim, 1986) as pluralistic ignorance (Glynn, Ostman & McDonald, 1995), suggests that our field may actually hold higher standards and greater confidence in standards than we commonly attribute to our peers. Following the third-person effect (Davison, 1983), respondents tended to view themselves as better able to withstand pressures and outdated thinking than their peers.

In fact, Sallot, Cameron, and Weaver-Lariscy (1997a) found that practitioners held their peers in comparatively low esteem, viewing others collectively as somewhat naive, unprofessional and unenlightened in comparison to their own personal self-images. While female practitioners are generally less sanguine about gender and racial equity in public relations, women tend to be more optimistic about standards for ethics and professional functions such as planning and research. Women also tended to be less harsh in their rating of peer professionalism, while also attributing lower values to others.

While some research has investigated educators' views on professional news values and journalistic behaviors in public relations (see, for example, Habermann, Kopenhaver, & Martinson, 1988), only one previous study examined public relations educators' views on professional standards per se. Sallot, Cameron and Weaver-Lariscy (1997b) surveyed 127 educators across the U.S. with the same instrument operationalizing 24 elements of professional performance that they used in their earlier studies. Educators were asked to assess the extent to which a standard of professionalism currently exists for each of the 24 items. Educators tended to view writing/editing and graphics/production skills, ethical guidelines, accreditation, and "public relations as advocacy" as enjoying well-established standards. Licensing, location of public relations on the organizational chart and inclusion of public relations in the dominant coalition were viewed as most lacking in a standard of professional performance. The 24 items factored into six dimensions. Assessments of professionalism along these six factors differed significantly as a function of sex, region, tenure of teaching, size of institution, and whether the educator was accredited by PRSA. Comparing educators' assessments with practitioners' views expressed in the earlier national survey, it is would seem that professional standards in public relations have yet to have coalesced among educators or practitioners.

The analysis in the present study intends to measure the degree of perceived consensus among educators about professional standards and the accuracy of educators' perceptions of professionalism held by peer educators and by practitioners in the field.

Using a Coorientation Approach

While coorientation as a phenomenon of social projection reaches back to Heider's (1958) balance theory concerned with consistency of relations at the interpersonal level, and Newcomb's (1953, 1961) perceived consensus theory as a condition of communicative interactions, it was Laing (1967, 1970) who argued that to share communal meanings, we need consensus. Drawing from the symbolic interactionists Mead and Dewey and from Durkheim's notion that collective representations come to be experienced as realities, Laing (1967; Laing, Phillipson & Lee, 1966) suggested we project our estimations of others' perceptions to determine whether we have consensus or conflict.

In Politics of Experience, Laing (1967) wrote,

> It makes a difference, presumably, to many people whether they think they are in agreement with what most people think (2nd level): and whether they think that most people regard them as like themselves (3rd level). It is possible to think what everyone else thinks and to believe that one is in a minority. It is possible to think what few people think and to suppose that one is in the majority. It is possible to feel that They feel one is like Them when one is not, and They do not. It is possible to believe this, but

> They believe that, so I'm sorry there is nothing I can do. (p. 81).

The only common bond between us may be the other (X), so we better agree on X if we want to have a common bond. This process of considering one's perception of the other's orientation to the topic as well as one's own orientation to the topic is _coorientation_ (Kim, 1986). Chaffee and McLeod (1968) developed what they termed a coorientation measurement model with three key measurements: _agreement_, as the degree to which one person's evaluations resemble the other's; _understanding or accuracy_, as the degree of similarity between the content of A's orientation toward X (not just a summary value) and B's corresponding orientational content; and _congruency_, an intrapersonal measure of the degree that Person A thinks B's opinion resembles his/her own.

Of these three, _understanding/accuracy_ is thought to be the most important because it better represents the effects of communication. For example, agreement on the focal point (X) must take place before persuasion can occur (Kim, 1986). Understanding/accuracy, agreement, and congruency are not functionally independent. A change in one of these variables will affect change in another. Although communication may often produce some increase in agreement it will not produce total agreement because each person arrives at his/her beliefs through his/her own personal experiences. Communication can produce marked increases in accuracy between two persons because the more two parties coorient by communicating their private values to one another, the more accurate their perceptions of one another's values should become (Chaffee & McLeod, 1968). Understanding can improve at a greater rate than agreement because, after communication, two parties may understand each other's views without necessarily agreeing on them. The term most often associated with this is "agreeing to disagree" (Kim, 1986).

According to Kim (1986), six basic types of coorientation states are possible: consensus, dissensus, ignorance, pseudo-consensus, semi-consensus, and semi-dissensus. We may agree with each other on something, but each of us may think that we disagree with each other, a state called pluralistic ignorance or false uniqueness. In the Chaffee-McLeod model, it is characterized by: high idea-understanding; low idea-congruencies; low idea-accuracies; and high meta idea-understanding.

According to Glynn, Ostman and McDonald (1995), pluralistic ignorance occurs when the minority position on issues is incorrectly perceived to be the majority position and vice versa. A range of factors, such as fear of embarrassment, social desirability, and social inhibition may affect the amount of discrepancy between one's own opinion and one's expressed opinion. They note that pluralistic ignorance is a product, not a process, occurring when there is an issue with divisiveness and the patterns of people's perceptions of the distribution of opinion are analyzed and result when individuals either overestimate or underestimate the proportion of others who think, feel or act as they themselves do.

In contrast, false consensus, also a product and not a process, occurs when individuals inaccurately perceive exaggerated agreement of others with themselves where agreement does not exist. We may disagree with each other, but each of us may think that we agree with each other. This pseudo-consensus system is akin to the concept of false consensus. In the Chaffee-McLeod model it is characterized by: low content understanding; high content-congruencies; low content-accuracies; and low meta-content-understanding. There is no way to determine beforehand "when pluralistic ignorance will occur or when false consensus will occur" (Glynn, Ostman & McDonald, 1995, p. 263).

A related phenomenon, third-person effect, occurs when individuals think that the media will have a greater impact on the opinions of others than on themselves (Davison, 1983). The third person may be seen as the "other" person, who is affected by mass mediated messages, or the original person, who, while not affected by the primary media message, may perceive the probability of the media's effect on others and may react to the impact that he or she perceives the message will have on others.

Research Questions

The present study set out to address these questions:

RQ #1: Do educators in public relations accurately perceive how their peer educators in the field view professional standards?

RQ #2: Do educators in public relations accurately perceive how practitioners in the field view professional standards?

RQ #2: How much consensus, if any, exists regarding professional standards among educators and practitioners in the field?

Method

There are precedents for using variations of coorientation measures in public relations research (see, for example, Aronoff, 1975; Broom, 1977; Grunig, 1978; Kopenhaver, Martinson & Ryan, 1984). In the interest of parsimony, the present study is limited to the coorientation measure of accuracy of educators' estimations of their peers' and educators' projections of practitioners' perceptions of standards of professionalism.[1] This study involves analysis of data collected in a national survey of public relations educators in November 1995.

Instrument. Forty-five questions were designed to enable coorientational analysis of practitioners' perceptions of professionalism, of their peers' perceptions and of educators' projections of practitioners' perceptions of professionalism. Respondents were instructed to answer each item three times as follows:

> For all questions in this section, please circle a number from 1 to 5 where 1 is "strongly disagree" and 5 is "strongly agree." Remember there is no right or wrong answer. Your first thought is what we want. You will answer each question three times. The first time is your personal opinion. The second, or "b" item, asks how you think the majority of other educators in public relations would answer the same items. The third, or "c" item, asks how you think the majority of practitioners in public relations would answer the same item.

Each of the subsequent 135 opinion statements was drawn from questions used in previous studies of professional standards (Cameron, Sallot & Weaver-Lariscy, 1996; Weaver-Lariscy, Sallot & Cameron, 1996; Sallot, Cameron & Weaver-Lariscy, 1997a). For example, the following pair of scaled questions elaborates upon the general concept of "public relations role" in organizations.

35a. A public relations practitioner should advocate the client's perspective, no matter what it is

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

35b. A majority of practitioners in our field would:

strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 strongly agree

All items were pre-tested with a sample of 22 faculty and graduate students to verify their categorical representation. Inter-coder reliability on item classification was 98-100% across all 45 statements. Another part of the survey elicited personal demographics and professional descriptive information.

The Sample. The sample consisted of all 291 names in the 1995 membership directory of the Educators Section of the Public Relations Society of America. Questionnaires were mailed with a cover letter requesting participation and were accompanied by a postage-paid return envelope. The initial mailing yielded 91 usable responses for a 31.3% return rate. A followup mailing made to non-respondents in January 1996 achieved an additional 36 responses, or 12.4%. Total usable responses received from 127 educators yielded an overall effective response rate of 43.6%.

Results

Description of Respondents

Of the 127 educators participating in the survey, 64% (N = 81) were male and 36% (N = 46) were female. About a third (N = 42) were aged 30-48, another approximate third (N = 44) were aged 49-57, with the oldest group (N = 35) aged 58-77. Nearly 92% (N = 116) of the respondents were Caucasian; 4% (N = 5) were Hispanic; 1.6% (N = 2) were African-American; .8% (N = 1) Asian, and 2.4 (N = 3) "other," respectively; there were no Native American respondents.

About 53% (N = 67) of the educators reported having acquired doctoral degrees and 40% (N = 51) had achieved master's degrees. Six percent (N = 8) possessed bachelor degrees, while .8% (N = 1) reported "some high school." More than a third of respondents (N = 44) majored as undergraduates in journalism, 16% (N = 20) in speech communication, 8% (N = 10) in political science, 7% (N = 9) in English, while only 3% (N = 4) each majored in public relations, mass communication and business, with others spread among a variety of fields. Almost 19% (N = 24) indicated graduate work in speech communication, 18% (N = 23) in public relations, 16.5% (N = 21) each in journalism and mass communication, 9% (N = 12) in business, and the balance across other fields.

Nearly 30% (N = 38) of educators reported enrollments of less than 10,000 at their institutions, 29% (N = 37) enrollments of 10,000 to 20,000, 26% (N = 33) 20,000 to 30,000, and 13% (N = 17) more than 30,000. Thirty-five percent (N = 44) were located in the Midwest, 31% (N = 40) in the Southeast, 17% (N = 22) in the Southwest, 12% (N = 15) in the Northeast, and 4% (N = 5) in the Northwest. Seventy-eight percent (N = 99) reported being affiliated with publicly-funded institutions and 20% (N = 25) were privately-funded. Forty-four percent (N = 56) of the institutions were ACEJMC-accredited, 56% (N = 71) were not accredited.

Half of Educators Have More Than 10 years' PR Experience, Are PRSA-Accredited

Thirty percent (N = 38) of the educators reported practicing public relations for 5-10 years; 24% (N = 30) 11-20 years; 25% (N = 32) 21-45 years; and 12% (N = 16) less than four years. During their public relations careers, 55% (N = 70) reported having worked in a government setting at one time or another, 40% (N = 51) in corporate, 27% (N = 34) in agencies, and 16% (N = 21) in "other" settings. About half (N = 63) said they had held managerial posts, while 21% (N = 26) described their functions as "technical," 8% (N = 10) as "executive," 6% (N = 8) as a combination of "technical-managerial," 4% (N = 5) as "other," and 1.6% (N = 2) as "all." Fifty-seven percent (N = 72) of the educators reported being APR-accredited by PRSA. Forty-three percent (N = 55) were not accredited.

Self-Perceptions vs. Cross-Perceptions of Standards

Standards of a profession ultimately aggregate from individual opinions and practices. But the morale of a profession as well as the momentum toward greater professionalism are greatly affected by perceived professionalism of our peers.

The means for the self-report items in this study represent the aggregates of respondents' individual opinions and, therefore, the means for the self-report items offer a contemporary measure of professional standards. When we compare a projection value with a corresponding self-report value from this same sample, we obtain a useful contrast between data about the current standard (self-report items) and data about the standard held by others (projection items).

Of the 45 items tested, educators under-estimated the strength of their educator peers' opinions that standards exist on 17 or 38% of the items (see Table 1). On these items, practitioners assigned themselves significantly superior ratings than they assigned to their peers. Standards included role, process, importance of research, organizational status, accountability and appropriate educational training for the field.

[Table 1 about here]

On 8 (18%) of the items, educators over-estimated strength of their peers' opinions (see Table 2), assigning themselves significantly weaker opinions on topics such as support for planning and evaluation research, importance of advocacy to the profession, and efficacy of ethics codes.

[Table 2 about here]

Table 3 summarizes the 20 (44%) items for which educators accurately estimated their peers' opinions and, coincidentally, for which there was consensus among educators regarding whether a professional standard exists. Standards are thought to exist for strategic planning, continuing education, use of research for excellence, access to top management, existence of codes of ethics, importance of public service, and writing skills. Educators agree no standards exist regarding equal pay on the basis of sex or race, professional advancement of women, and licensing.

[Table 3 about here]

In general, educators tended to think they hold higher standards than practitioners: educators under-estimated the strength of practitioners' opinions that standards exist on 23, just over half, of the items (see Table 4). All of the educators' assessments for themselves were above the mean for these items.

[Table 4 about here]

Educators assigned themselves weaker opinions on standards compared with practitioners on 12 (27%) items (see Table 5), with assessments for their own opinions below the mean for 10 items.

[Table 5 about here]

Educators thought they agreed with practitioners on only 10 (22%) of the items (see Table 6).

[Table 6 about here]

Post Hoc Analysis

Weaver-Lariscy, Sallot & Cameron (1996) found that while it is clear that standards are emerging for some issues and practices and not for others, when it comes to justice and equity for all, female and male practitioners disagree. Male practitioners "see" more justice and equity existing in the system than women are experiencing; female practitioners therefore do not perceive a "just and equitable" standard in the field because, for them, it does not exist.

In the present study, it is interesting that respondents as a whole accurately predicted neutral responses for peers (3.2) that a predominance of women in the field leads to lower salaries for everyone, and negative responses for peers (2.3) that "there are no restrictions on the professional advancement of women." Likewise, educators accurately predicted peers' negative responses (1.9) that "Women and men in the field of PR are being paid equally."

To investigate whether any differences exist between male and female educators, post hoc analyses consisting of oneway analyses of variance of each of the 45 items measuring cross-perceptions of self, peers and practitioners were conducted. Based on the previous study, it is not surprising that significant differences were found between women and men on the self-opinion estimates for two of the three gender equity items (see Table 7). For the item "Women and men in the field of PR are being paid equally" female educators rated themselves and practitioners as significantly less likely than men to agree.

But there was no significant difference between men and women on estimates of educator peers' opinions for the item. For the item "There are no restrictions on the professional advancement of women," female educators rated themselves significantly less likely than males to agree. Again there were no significant differences between men and women on estimates of educator peers' opinions, and no difference projected for practitioners' opinions on this item.

(Table 7 about here)

There were additional differences between male and female educators' responses. Women were less likely than men to see themselves and their peers as believing intuition is important in public relations. Personally, women were less likely than men to see racial equity in the field, and projected the same opinions for practitioners, and less likely to believe practitioners think professional organizations enforce ethics codes. Male educators personally held stronger opinions than did female educators regarding the importance of helping organizations respond to constituents.

Comparing Educators' and Practitioners' Ratings of Professional Standards

To compare educators' evaluations of professional standards with public relations practitioners' assessments, the data from the present study of educators was combined with the data from the national survey of practitioners[2] conducted by Cameron, Sallot, and Weaver-Lariscy (1996).[3]

Comparing means of assessments of their own beliefs about standards, educators and practitioners disagreed on 28, or 62%, of the items (see Table 8). Practitioners were more optimistic than educators about standards for access to top management, believed intuition is important to the practice, think a business degree is appropriate training for public relations while educators are more neutral. Educators were significantly less optimistic than practitioners about standards regarding enforcement of ethics codes, professional advancement of women, formal instruction for practitioners in management skills, equal pay for practitioners of different races, organization perceptions of management versus technician roles in the field, and advocacy for clients regardless of circumstances.

(Table 8 about here)

Comparing means of projections about other practitioners' beliefs about standards, educators and practitioners agreed on 29, or 64%, of the items (see Table 9). Practitioners' projections were lower for the peers than were educators' estimations of practitioners' standards for importance of writing skills, accountability, and management perceptions of technician vs. management roles. Practitioners were more optimistic than educators in projections about practitioners' support of continuing education, access to top management, their own roles as managers, and cost-effectiveness of research in campaigns.

(Table 9 about here)

Comparing means of assessments of educators' projections of perception of practitioners in the field with practitioners' own beliefs about professional standards reveal that educators' estimations about practitioners' own opinions were wrong on 20 (44%) of the items (see Table 10). In general, educators under-estimated practitioners professionalism a bit less than half the time.

(Table 10 about here)

Discussion

Results of this study suggest that there is little consensus about professional standards in public relations among educators and practitioners, resulting in considerable pluralistic ignorance, under-estimations or over-estimations of others' opinions (Glynn, Ostman & McDonald, 1995). On a more positive note, educators overall are somewhat more optimistic about standards in the field and are slightly better estimators of their peers' opinions on the subject, than are practitioners when estimating beliefs of their professional peers.

Still, overall, this study's findings suggest that both educators and practitioners hold their peers in comparatively poor esteem. In general, educators view their peers, and educators and practitioners together view other practitioners predominantly as somewhat unprofessional and unenlightened in comparison to their own personal self-images.

While the over-estimations and under-estimations of colleagues' opinions may indeed signal occurrences of pluralistic ignorance, these results may also in some ways be related to Davison's (1983) third-person effect in which others are seen to respond differently and with less sophistication to the same message. This may play out in scenarios in which the individual practitioner perceives that when the Public Relations Society of America says its code is sound and enforced, others believe this; or when management directs the practitioner to go forth and advocate for the organization, no matter what, this directive has a greater effect on others than on the self.

It is important to note that these assessments rely on value judgements based on the premise that the items have valences, from lesser to greater professionalism. In making these assessments, the authors are making assumptions, for example, that blind advocacy is unprofessional, that it is better to have formal instruction in management, and that grounding public relations programs in research is a sound approach.

Findings from the present study converge with some of the findings from earlier studies (Cameron, Sallot & Weaver-Lariscy, 1996; Sallot, Cameron & Weaver-Lariscy, 1997a, 1997b). Licensing, location of public relations on the organizational chart and inclusion of public relations in the dominant coalition (technician versus manager) were viewed in the earlier studies as most lacking in a performance standard of professionalism, and were ranked below the mean again in the present study.

One area -- advocacy in public relations -- is getting mixed responses. Although relatively positive response was given for the view of public relations as advocacy in two earlier studies (Cameron, Sallot & Weaver-Lariscy, 1996; Sallot, Cameron & Weaver-Lariscy, 1997b), in another prior study (Sallot, Cameron & Weaver-Lariscy, 1997a) and in the present work, educators and practitioners clearly disparage "blind advocacy" and see their respective peers more likely to accept advocacy as such than they do personally.

Previously, practitioners tended to view ethical guidelines and writing/editing skills as enjoying well established performance standards. In the present study, ethics and writing/editing items are rated by educators well above the mean of 3.0 (with the exception of the item stating that codes of ethics are enforced by professional organizations). But the really good news here is that educators also strongly endorse standards for social responsibility, strategic planning, and accountability grounded in research, and educators clearly assign higher status and recognize organizational value to public relations than do practitioners. This may be a result of educators communicating more closely with their peers, from reading the same academic literature, and from teaching similar values.

However, regarding standards of gender equity, the educators don't perform much better than do practitioners when responses are separated and analyzed by sex. Female educators are more likely than men to see inequalities in the field based on sex, and they ascribe stronger opinions about those inequities to themselves than to their peers; perhaps again the explanation is that women have experienced these inequities when they worked in the field while male educators did not share that direct experience.

Interestingly, this study calls into question the widely accepted stereotype that women are more intuitive, and see themselves as such, than men. Here, women were less likely than men to see themselves and their peers as believing intuition is important in public relations. Another study

(Wilkes-Mitrook & Cameron, 1993) examined characteristics of males and female public relations majors and non-majors and found that male public relations majors may be atypically less assertive and less career-oriented than non-major males, with just the opposite occurring among female majors and non-majors. Perhaps there is a converging of psychological sex types among students of public relations. In that case, then, "in the real world" women wouldn't be expected to be any more or less intuitive than men.

Methodological Implications

There are a number of methodological concerns with coorientation measurement. A major problem is the limited ability of people to assess what the "other opinion" is when it is the aggregate and not just a single person (McLeod, Becker, & Elliott, 1972). When asked what "others" in the aggregate think, the individual must treat the entity as though it has cognitions and is real. If asked what the average member of the aggregate believes, which may be the best way to make the aggregate seem real, which statistic to use must then be decided -- the mean, the median or the mode. And this raises a question: will the person participating in the survey understand whichever statistic is selected and requested?

Grunig and Stamm (1972) suggest asking the respondent how any subcollectivities she/he recognizes and to predict the cognitions of each subgroup. They argue that ability to recognize subcollectivities indicates the ability to achieve a coorientational state. But, obviously, the gathering of such complex data in most instances is prohibitive.

A strong theoretical base exists to suggest that projections of estimations of others' perceptions are useful determinants to gauge whether states are consensual or conflicting (Laing, 1967; Laing, Phillipson & Lee, 1966). Despite methodological concerns, coorientation measures (Chaffe & McLeod, 1968) have been found to be effective in signalling conditions of pluralistic ignorance or false consensus (Kim, 1986; Glynn, Ostman & McDonald, 1995) and there is precedence for applying coorientation measures in public relations research. Therefore, in this study, applying coorientation accuracy measures to each of the 45 items as a means of assessing degrees of consensus is well-grounded in theory and practice. The 45 items used in this battery were developed along with a battery of 24 items derived from 60 interviews representing 200 hours of interviewing; pre-tests revealed valid item classification for the 45 items relative to professional standards in public relations.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study suggest pluralistic ignorance with a third-person effect that public relations educators tend to erroneously believe that they themselves hold higher professional standards than do their educator peers and particularly than do practitioners in the field. Such beliefs tend to assault and batter professional morale of both educators and professionals while assailing public relations' self-image and reputation. Given the influence that educators have on the future of the field, it is imperative that educators work to elevate the profession by promulgating professional standards among their students and the practitioners in the field with whom they have contact.

Fortunately, the findings from this study also represent a ray of light: in general, public relations educators, like practitioners in the field, are in actuality more professional and hold higher professional standards than they give their peers credit for. Like practitioners, public relations educators need to recognize that they, and those in the field, are better than they think they are.

Future research in professional standards should investigate further what roles practitioners believe that public relations education and educators are playing in perceptions of professional standards. Future research might also examine the public's perception of professional standards in the field.

Summary

There is very little consensus regarding professional standards among educators and/or practitioners in public relations, although educators more accurately perceive how their peers view professional standards than do practitioners in the field. This dissensus regarding professional standards may at least in part account for the field's poor self-image, particularly in regard to educators' and practitioners' assessments of other practitioners as tending to be naive, unenlightened and unprofessional. Public relations educators and practitioners both are apparently their own worst critics.

The coorientation literature suggests that communication can produce marked increases in accuracy and understanding (Chaffee & McLeod, 1968; Kim, 1986). Greater dialogue regarding the importance of professional standards in public relations should be encouraged among both educators and practitioners as such discussion is likely to lead to greater consensus as well as enhanced confidence and reputation for the practitioners of today and tomorrow.

Notes

1. It is important to note that a potential limitation of this study involves ecological validity. While we analyzed and report means for the entire sample for related items, we do not have paired analysis for all items.

2. A potential limitation of these comparisons is that data from the survey of practitioners was collected approximately two years before data was collected for the present study of educators. Therefore, history poses a threat to internal validity of the comparisons (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Also, practitioners surveyed were not asked to evaluate standards held by educators.

3. In the Cameron, Sallot, Weaver-Lariscy (1996), Weaver-Lariscy, Sallot, Cameron (1996) and Sallot, Cameron, Weaver-Lariscy (1997a) studies, 598 names from the 1993 PRSA national membership directory were randomly mailed the survey, yielding a 42% response rate. Of the 251 practitioners participating in the survey, 55% (N = 138) were female and 43.4% (N = 109) were male. About a third (N = 81) were aged 41-50, almost another third (N = 76) were aged 31-40, with 1 % (N = 41) aged 20-30, nearly 13% (N = 32) aged 51-60 and 8% (N = 19) aged 60-plus. Nearly 95% (N = 237) of the respondents were Caucasian; 1.6% (N = 4) were Hispanic; .8% (N = 2) were African-American, Native-American and "other," respectively; and one respondent was Asian-American.

Nearly equal numbers of practitioners reported working in corporate settings (N = 76), in government-nonprofit settings (N = 72) and in agency settings (N = 69). More than half (N = 131) said they held managerial posts, while 19% (N = 47) described their functions as "executive," 12% (N = 30) as "technical," 10% (N = 24) as a combination of "technical-managerial," 4% (N = 10) as "other," 2% (N = 5) as "all." Sixty-two percent (N = 155) of the practitioners reported having acquired bachelor's degrees and 32% (N = 79) had achieved master's degrees. Nearly 4% (N = 9) possessed doctoral degrees, while fewer than 3% (N = 7) reported "some college." Almost a third of respondents (N = 78) majored in journalism, 13% (N = 33) in English, and 12% (N = 30) in speech communication, while only 6% (N = 14) majored in public relations. Forty-six percent indicated graduate work in a variety of fields including speech communication, business, management, journalism, public relations, and English.

Almost one-third (N = 80) reported practicing public relations for 4-10 years; 20% (N = 40) 11-15 years; 16% (N = 40) 16-20 years; 12% (N = 30) 21-25 years; 11% (N = 28) more than 25 years; 8% (N = 20) three years or less; and two practitioners were retired. More than one-third (N = 89) of the practitioners reported being APR-accredited by PRSA. Sixty-five percent (N = 162) were not accredited.

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Table 1

Mean Estimates of Educators' Opinions for Self Ranked Higher Than Educator-Peers' Opinions

Professional standard	Mean for Own Opinion	Mean for Peers' Opinion	t-value
A PR practitioner should help an organization respond to its constituents (e.g., stakeholders, employees, publics)	4.9	4.7	2.51*
A public relations practitioner has a responsibility to serve as a liaison between an organization and its publics	4.8	4.7	3.35*
An effective PR department/unit sets measurable objectives	4.7	4.5	3.05*
A practitioner should analyze a situation and its possible solutions when making a decision	4.7	4.6	3.06*
A practitioner's activities are instrumental to the success of his/her organization	4.5	4.3	3.6***
Goal setting and development of strategies to meet those goals is important in everyday public relations practices	4.7	4.5	2.55*
An effective PR department/unit establishes methods to measure the success or failure of its objectives	4.7	4.5	3.49**
Issue tracking helps to identify future problems that may affect the organization	4.6	4.4	3.67***
A practitioner is personally accountable for his/her productivity	4.2	3.9	3.94***
Scanning research helps to identify important issues within the community	4.1	4.0	2.22*
Management perceives the public relations role as more of a technician than manager	3.7	3.4	3.98***
A liberal arts degree is appropriate training for public relations	3.5	3.4	2.05*
I have direct access to the top management of my organization	3.4	2.8	5.21***
It should be left up to the individual to seek training that updates him/her about new technology in the field	3.2	3.0	2.89*
Intuition is a major part of decision making in PR	3.0	2.6	4.43***
A marketing degree is appropriate training for public relations	2.6	2.1	3.91***
A business degree is appropriate training for public relations	2.5	2.2	2.43*

N = 127, df = 126.

* paired t-test significant at $p < .05$
** paired t-test significant at $p < .001$
*** paired t-test significant at $p < .0001$

Note: Respondents were instructed: For all questions in this section, please circle a number from 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is strongly agree. Remember there is no right or wrong answer. Your first thought is what we want! You will answer each question three times. The first time is your personal opinion. The second, or "b" item, asks how you think the majority of other educators in public relations would answer the same items. The third, or "c" item, asks how you think the majority of practitioners in public relations would answer the same items.

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Table 2

Mean Estimates of Educators' Opinions for Self Ranked Lower Than Educator-Peers' Opinions

Professional standard	Mean for Own Opinion	Mean for Peers' Opinion	t-value
Social scientific research is an accurate evaluation of the effectiveness of a public relations campaign	3.5	3.8	-3.25**
The university from which you graduate affects the quality of the professional work you do	3.5	3.7	-2.33*
Public relations planning is supported by most organizations	3.0	3.1	-2.93*
Evaluation research is supported by most organizations	2.6	2.9	-4.22***
Ethics committees of the professional organizations properly enforce the ethics codes	2.4	2.6	-3.07*
Most practitioners have had formal instruction in management skills and techniques	2.0	2.3	-4.55***
A public relations practitioner should advocate the client's perspective, no matter what it is	1.8	1.9	-2.38*
My role in my organization is more of a technician than manager	1.8	2.0	-2.85*

N = 127, df = 126.

* paired t-test significant at $p < .05$
** paired t-test significant at $p < .001$
*** paired t-test significant at $p < .0001$

Note: Respondents were instructed: For all questions in this section, please circle a number from 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is strongly agree. Remember there is no right or wrong answer. Your first thought is what we want! You will answer each question three times. The first time is your personal opinion. The second, or "b" item, asks how you think the majority of other educators in public relations would answer the same items. The third, or "c" item, asks how you think the majority of practitioners in public relations would answer the same items.

Table 3

No Significant Differences Between Mean Estimates of Educators' Opinions for Self and Educator-Peers

Professional standard	Mean for Own Opinion	Mean for Peers' Opinion	t-value
A public relations department/unit should strategically set goals and objectives prior to implementing a campaign	4.8	4.7	1.72
A practitioner should continue his/her education in public relations through academic training and/or professional skills and techniques	4.6	4.4	1.72
Research skills are essential for the PR practitioner	4.6	4.5	1.06
Without reservation, a practitioner should have direct contact with the company president or CEO	4.4	4.4	-.40
Social scientific research is necessary for excellence in PR	4.1	4.1	.45
The professional organizations' (PRSA, IABC, etc.) codes of ethics are appropriate	4.1	4.1	.92
A practitioner's function is not just a job but also as a public service to the community	4.0	3.9	.09
A public relations practitioner has a strong influence over constituency satisfaction	4.0	3.9	1.32
Writing skills are the most important aspect of PR training	3.8	3.9	-1.77
Social scientific research is cost-effective in PR campaigns	3.6	3.8	-1.71
Professional ethics codes lead to more socially responsible actions by practitioners	3.5	3.7	-1.51
An effective public relations department/unit utilizes a Total Quality Management (TQM) process (or something similar)	3.3	3.4	-.69
A predominance of women in public relations leads to lower salaries for everyone	3.1	3.2	-.26
In some instances a practitioner's organization has found it necessary to deceive its publics	3.0	2.9	.54
Public relations in most organizations is part of the decision-making team	2.8	2.8	-.96
Public relations should be a licensed profession	2.4	2.6	-1.53
There are no restrictions on the professional advancement of women	2.3	2.3	.32
A public relations department/unit is too busy putting out fires to develop a long-term strategic plan	2.3	2.3	-.11
Women and men in the field of PR are being paid equally	1.9	1.8	.93
Regardless of race, everyone is being paid the same in the field of public relations	1.9	2.0	-1.08

N = 127, df = 126.
* paired t-test significant at $p < .05$
** paired t-test significant at $p < .001$
*** paired t-test significant at $p < .0001$

Note: Respondents were instructed: For all questions in this section, please circle a number from 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is strongly agree. Remember there is no right or wrong answer. Your first thought is what we want! You will answer each question three times. The first time is your personal opinion. The second, or "b" item, asks how you think the majority of other educators in public relations would answer the same items. The third, or "c" item, asks how you think the majority of practitioners in public relations would answer the same items.

Table 4

Mean Estimates of Educators' Opinions for Self Ranked Higher Than Professionals' Opinions

Professional standard	Mean for Own Opinion	Mean for Peers' Opinion	t-value
A PR practitioner should help an organization respond to its constituents (e.g., stakeholders, employees, publics)	4.9	4.6	4.90***
A public relations department/unit should strategically set goals and objectives prior to implementing a campaign	4.8	4.3	6.89***
A public relations practitioner has a responsibility to serve as a liaison between an organization and its publics	4.8	4.4	6.19***
A practitioner should analyze a situation and its possible solutions when making a decision	4.7	4.4	4.94***
An effective PR department/unit sets measurable objectives	4.7	4.0	8.12***
Goal setting and development of strategies to meet those goals is important in everyday public relations practices	4.7	4.0	9.47***
An effective PR department/unit establishes methods to measure the success or failure of its objectives	4.7	3.9	10.26***
Research skills are essential for the PR practitioner	4.6	3.4	13.12***
A practitioner should continue his/her education in public relations through academic training and/or professional skills and techniques	4.6	3.9	8.32***
Issue tracking helps to identify future problems that may affect the organization	4.6	4.1	7.90***
A practitioner's activities are instrumental to the success of his/her organization	4.5	4.3	2.48*
Without reservation, a practitioner should have direct contact with the company president or CEO	4.4	4.2	2.72*
A practitioner is personally accountable for his/her productivity	4.2	4.0	2.19*
The professional organizations' (PRSA, IABC, etc.) codes of ethics are appropriate	4.1	3.7	4.25***
Social scientific research is necessary for excellence in PR	4.1	2.7	13.37***
*Scanning research helps to identify important issues within the community	4.1	3.6	6.22***
A public relations practitioner has a strong influence over constituency satisfaction	4.0	3.8	2.59*
A practitioner's function is not just a job but also as a public service to the community	4.0	3.3	6.61***
Management perceives the public relations role as more of a technician than manager	3.7	3.5	3.31**
Social scientific research is cost-effective in PR campaigns	3.6	2.6	9.99***
The university from which you graduate affects the quality of the professional work you do	3.5	3.1	3.07*
Social scientific research is an accurate evaluation of the effectiveness of a public relations campaign	3.5	2.9	6.52***
I have direct access to the top management of my organization	3.4	2.8	4.70***

Table 4 (cont'd).

N = 127. df = 126.

* paired t-test significant at p < .05
** paired t-test significant at p < .001
*** paired t-test significant at p < .0001

Note: Respondents were instructed: For all questions in this section, please circle a number from 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is strongly agree. Remember there is no right or wrong answer. Your first thought is what we want! You will answer each question three times. The first time is your personal opinion. The second, or "b" item, asks how you think the majority of other educators in public relations would answer the same items. The third, or "c" item, asks how you think the majority of practitioners in public relations would answer the same items.

Table 5

Mean Estimates of Educators' Opinions for Self Ranked Lower Than Professionals' Opinions

Professional standard	Mean for Own Opinion	Mean for Peers' Opinion	t-value
Writing skills are the most important aspect of PR training	3.8	4.3	-4.68***
Intuition is a major part of decision making in PR	3.0	3.5	-5.13***
A marketing degree is appropriate training for public relations	2.6	3.4	-7.95***
A business degree is appropriate training for public relations	2.5	3.1	-6.52***
Ethics committees of the professional organizations properly enforce the ethics codes	2.4	2.8	-4.27***
A public relations department/unit is too busy putting out fires to develop a long-term strategic plan	2.3	3.1	-8.66***
There are no restrictions on the professional advancement of women	2.3	2.7	-3.54**
Most practitioners have had formal instruction in management skills and techniques	2.0	2.5	-6.35***
Regardless of race, everyone is being paid the same in the field of public relations	1.9	2.3	-5.67**
Women and men in the field of PR are being paid equally	1.9	2.3	-4.46***
My role in my organization is more of a technician than manager	1.8	2.3	-4.84***
A public relations practitioner should advocate the client's perspective, no matter what it is	1.8	2.8	-10.54***

N = 127. df = 126.

* paired t-test significant at $p < .05$
** paired t-test significant at $p < .001$
*** paired t-test significant at $p < .0001$

Note: Respondents were instructed: For all questions in this section, please circle a number from 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is strongly agree. Remember there is no right or wrong answer. Your first thought is what we want! You will answer each question three times. The first time is your personal opinion. The second, or "b" item, asks how you think the majority of other educators in public relations would answer the same items. The third, or "c" item, asks how you think the majority of practitioners in public relations would answer the same items.

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Table 6

No Significant Differences Between Mean Estimates of Educators' Opinions for Self and Professionals

Professional standard	Mean for Own Opinion	Mean for Peers' Opinion	t-value
A liberal arts degree is appropriate training for public relations	3.5	3.3	2.41
Professional ethics codes lead to more socially responsible actions by practitioners	3.5	3.4	1.41
An effective public relations department/unit utilizes a Total Quality Management (TQM) process (or something similar)	3.3	3.3	.58
It should be left up to the individual to seek training that updates him/her about new technology in the field	3.2	3.3	-1.08
A predominance of women in public relations leads to lower salaries for everyone	3.1	3.2	-.75
Public relations planning is supported by most organizations	3.0	3.0	-.33
In some instances a practitioner's organization has found it necessary to deceive its publics	3.0	3.1	-1.21
Public relations in most organizations is part of the decision-making team	2.8	2.9	-1.91
Evaluation research is supported by most organizations	2.6	2.8	-1.53
Public relations should be a licensed profession	2.4	2.2	1.33

N = 127. df = 126.

* paired t-test significant at $p < .05$
** paired t-test significant at $p < .001$
*** paired t-test significant at $p < .0001$

Note: Respondents were instructed: For all questions in this section, please circle a number from 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is strongly agree. Remember there is no right or wrong answer. Your first thought is what we want! You will answer each question three times. The first time is your personal opinion. The second, or "b" item, asks how you think the majority of other educators in public relations would answer the same items. The third, or "c" item, asks how you think the majority of practitioners in public relations would answer the same items.

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Table 7

Means of Educators' Opinions for Self and Educators' Estimates for Peers and Practitioners Significantly Different by Sex

Professional standard	Mean for Own Opinions		Mean for Peers' Opinions		Mean for Practitioners' Opinions		F-ratio
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	
Intuition is a major part of decision making in public relations	3.3	2.5					12.2**
			2.8	2.3			4.9*
					3.6	3.3	2.3
Women and men in the field of PR are being paid equally	2.1	1.6					8.4**
			1.9	1.8			.8
					2.4	2.0	6.2*
There are no restrictions on The professional advancement of women	2.6	1.9					9.8**
			2.3	2.3			.1
					2.7	2.6	.1
Regardless of race, everyone is being paid the same in the field of public relations	2.0	1.6					7.2**
			2.0	1.8			3.0
					2.4	2.0	4.6*
A PR practitioner should help an organization respond to its constituents (e.g., stakeholders, employees, publics)	4.9	4.8					5.5*
			4.8	4.6			2.9
					4.6	4.4	1.6
Ethics committees of the professional associations properly enforce the ethics codes	2.4	2.3					.3
			2.7	2.4			2.5
					2.9	2.6	3.8*

N = 127, df = 1, 125
Men N = 81, Female N = 46

* Oneway ANOVA significant at $p < .05$
** Oneway ANOVA significant at $p < .001$
*** Oneway ANOVA significant at $p < .0001$

Note: Respondents were instructed: For all questions in this section, please circle a number from 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is strongly agree. Remember there is no right or wrong answer. Your first thought is what we want! You will answer each question three times. The first time is your personal opinion. The second, or "b" item, asks how you think the majority of other educators in public relations would answer the same items. The third, or "c" item, asks how you think the majority of practitioners in public relations would answer the same items.

Table 8

Comparisons of Means of Educators' and Practitioners' Own Opinions About Standards

Professional standard	Mean for Educators	Mean for Practitioners	t-value
A PR practitioner should help an organization respond to its constituents (e.g., stakeholders, employees, publics)	4.9	4.6	-5.99***
A public relations department/unit should strategically set goals and objectives prior to implementing a campaign	4.8	4.5	-4.48***
A public relations practitioner has a responsibility to serve as a liaison between an organization and its publics	4.8	4.5	-6.18***
Goal setting and development of strategies to meet those goals is important in everyday public relations practices	4.7	4.4	-4.94***
A practitioner should analyze a situation and its possible solutions when making a decision	4.7	4.5	-3.43**
An effective PR department/unit sets measurable objectives	4.7	4.4	-4.92***
An effective PR department/unit establishes methods to measure the success or failure of its objectives	4.7	4.3	-5.89***
Research skills are essential for the PR practitioner	4.6	4.1	-6.85***
A practitioner should continue his/her education in public relations through academic training and/or professional skills and techniques	4.6	4.3	-3.15*
Issue tracking helps to identify future problems that may affect the organization	4.6	4.2	-6.80***
A practitioner's activities are instrumental to the success of his/her organization	4.5	4.3	-3.10*
Without reservation, a practitioner should have direct contact with the company president or CEO	4.4	4.5	1.54
A practitioner is personally accountable for his/her productivity	4.2	4.2	-.22
The professional organizations' (PRSA, IABC, etc.) codes of ethics are appropriate	4.1	4.2	1.36
Social scientific research is necessary for excellence in PR	4.1	3.5	-6.00***
Scanning research helps to identify important issues within the community	4.1	3.6	-4.64***
A public relations practitioner has a strong influence over constituency satisfaction	4.0	3.8	-2.10*
A practitioner's function is not just a job but also as a public service to the community	4.0	3.5	-3.54***
Writing skills are the most important aspect of PR training	3.8	3.7	-.61
Management perceives the public relations role as more of a technician than manager	3.7	3.2	-4.92***
Social scientific research is cost-effective in PR campaigns	3.6	3.1	-3.93***
The university from which you graduate affects the quality of the professional work you do	3.5	3.1	-3.08*
Social scientific research is an accurate evaluation of the effectiveness of a public relations campaign	3.5	3.0	-4.40***

Table 8 (cont'd.)

Comparisons of Means of Educators' and Practitioners' Own Opinions About Standards

Professional standard	Mean for Educators	Mean for Practitioners	t-value
A liberal arts degree is appropriate training for public relations	3.5	3.5	-.68
Professional ethics codes lead to more socially responsible actions by practitioners	3.5	3.5	.02
An effective public relations department/unit utilizes a Total Quality Management (TQM) process (or something similar)	3.3	3.3	-.04
I have direct access to the top management of my organization	3.4	4.4	5.74***
It should be left up to the individual to seek training that updates him/her about new technology in the field	3.2	3.3	.45
A predominance of women in public relations leads to lower salaries for everyone	3.1	3.0	-1.17
Public relations planning is supported by most organizations	3.0	2.9	-.89
In some instances a practitioner's organization has found it necessary to deceive its publics	3.0	2.9	-.54
Intuition is a major part of decision making in PR	3.0	3.4	3.25**
Public relations in most organizations is part of the decision-making team	2.8	2.7	-.36
Evaluation research is supported by most organizations	2.6	2.6	-.08
A marketing degree is appropriate training for public relations	2.6	3.1	4.30***
A business degree is appropriate training for public relations	2.5	2.8	2.23*
Ethics committees of the professional organizations properly enforce the ethics codes	2.4	2.8	3.63***
Public relations should be a licensed profession	2.4	2.5	.77
A public relations department/unit is too busy putting out fires to develop a long-term strategic plan	2.3	2.3	.68
There are no restrictions on the professional advancement of women	2.3	2.7	2.82*
Most practitioners have had formal instruction in management skills and techniques	2.0	2.2	2.50*
Regardless of race, everyone is being paid the same in the field of public relations	1.9	2.1	2.14*
Women and men in the field of PR are being paid equally	1.9	1.9	.30
My role in my organization is more of a technician than manager	1.8	2.2	3.05*
A public relations practitioner should advocate the client's perspective, no matter what it is	1.8	2.2	3.33**

Table 8 (cont'd.)

N = 251 practitioners, 127 educators.

* t-test significant at $p < .05$
** t-test significant at $p < .001$
*** t-test significant at $p < .0001$

Note: Educator respondents were instructed: For all questions in this section, please circle a number from 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is strongly agree. Remember there is no right or wrong answer. Your first thought is what we want! You will answer each question three times. The first time is your personal opinion. The second, or "b" item, asks how you think the majority of other educators in public relations would answer the same items. The third, or "c" item, asks how you think the majority of practitioners in public relations would answer the same items.

Practitioner respondents were instructed: For all questions in this section, please circle a number from 1 to 5 where 1 is strongly disagree, and 5 is strongly agree. Remember there is no right or wrong answer. Your first thought is what we want! You will answer each question two times. The first time is your personal opinion. The second, or "b" item, asks how you think the majority of practitioners in your field would answer the same items. The data was transformed before analysis so that "b" responses from practitioners corresponded to "c" responses from educators.

Instructions to the educator respondents and to the practitioner respondents for responses summarized in Tables 8, 9 and 10 were identical.

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Table 9

Comparisons of Means of Educators' and Practitioners' Estimates About Standards for Other Practitioners

Professional standard	Mean for Educators	Mean for Practitioners	t-value
A PR practitioner should help an organization respond to its constituents (e.g., stakeholders, employees, publics)	4.5	4.4	-1.68
A public relations practitioner has a responsibility to serve as a liaison between an organization and its publics	4.4	4.2	-1.69
A practitioner should analyze a situation and its possible solutions when making a decision	4.4	4.2	-2.26*
Writing skills are the most important aspect of PR training	4.3	3.7	-5.71***
A public relations department/unit should strategically set goals and objectives prior to implementing a campaign	4.3	4.3	-.06
A practitioner's activities are instrumental to the success of his/her organization	4.3	4.1	-1.75
Without reservation, a practitioner should have direct contact with the company president or CEO	4.2	4.4	1.77
Issue tracking helps to identify future problems that may affect the organization	4.1	4.0	-1.15
Goal setting and development of strategies to meet those goals is important in everyday public relations practices	4.0	4.1	1.16
An effective PR department/unit sets measurable objectives	4.0	4.0	-.52
A practitioner is personally accountable for his/her productivity	4.0	3.8	-1.95*
An effective PR department/unit establishes methods to measure the success or failure of its objectives	3.9	4.0	1.08
A practitioner should continue his/her education in public relations through academic training and/or professional skills and techniques	3.9	4.1	1.85*
A public relations practitioner has a strong influence over constituency satisfaction	3.8	3.7	-.53
The professional organizations' (PRSA, IABC, etc.) codes of ethics are appropriate	3.7	4.1	3.95
Scanning research helps to identify important issues within the community	3.6	3.5	-1.34
Intuition is a major part of decision making in PR	3.5	3.3	-2.05*
Management perceives the public relations role as more of a technician than manager	3.5	3.2	-2.30***
Research skills are essential for the PR practitioner	3.4	3.7	3.03*
Professional ethics codes lead to more socially responsible actions by practitioners	3.4	3.6	2.27*
A practitioner's function is not just a job but also as a public service to the community	3.3	3.4	.79
A liberal arts degree is appropriate training for public relations	3.3	3.2	-.68

Table 9 (cont'd.)

Comparisons of Means of Educators' and Practitioners' Estimates About Standards for Other Practitioners

Professional standard	Mean for Educators	Mean for Practitioners	t-value
An effective public relations department/unit utilizes a Total Quality Management (TQM) process (or something similar)	3.3	3.3	.07
It should be left up to the individual to seek training that updates him/her about new technology in the field	3.3	3.3	-.78
A marketing degree is appropriate training for public relations	3.3	3.1	-2.72*
A predominance of women in public relations leads to lower salaries for everyone	3.2	3.1	-.71
A public relations department/unit is too busy putting out fires to develop a long-term strategic plan	3.1	2.6	-3.74***
A business degree is appropriate training for public relations	3.1	2.6	-4.57***
The university from which you graduate affects the quality of the professional work you do	3.1	3.2	.37
In some instances a practitioner's organization has found it necessary to deceive its publics	3.1	2.9	-1.04
Public relations planning is supported by most organizations	3.0	3.0	.46
Social scientific research is an accurate evaluation of the effectiveness of a public relations campaign	2.9	3.0	1.32
Public relations in most organizations is part of the decision-making team	2.9	2.8	-1.08
I have direct access to the top management of my organization	2.8	3.4	3.98***
Evaluation research is supported by most organizations	2.8	2.9	1.02
Ethics committees of the professional organizations properly enforce the ethics codes	2.8	3.1	2.73*
A public relations practitioner should advocate the client's perspective, no matter what it is	2.8	2.7	-1.12
Social scientific research is necessary for excellence in PR	2.7	3.3	5.29***
There are no restrictions on the professional advancement of women	2.7	2.8	.65
Social scientific research is cost-effective in PR campaigns	2.6	3.1	4.45***
Most practitioners have had formal instruction in management skills and techniques	2.5	2.6	1.02
My role in my organization is more of a technician than manager	2.4	2.7	2.37*
Regardless of race, everyone is being paid the same in the field of public relations	2.3	2.3	.28
Women and men in the field of PR are being paid equally	2.3	2.7	-.86
Public relations should be a licensed profession	2.2	2.6	4.18***

N = 251 practitioners, 127 educators.

* t-test significant at p < .05
** t-test significant at p < .001
*** t-test significant at p < .0001

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Table 10

Comparisons of Means of Educators' Estimates of Practitioners' Opinions and Practitioners' Own Opinions About Standards

Professional standard	Mean for Educators	Mean for Practitioners	t-value
A PR practitioner should help an organization respond to its constituents (e.g., stakeholders, employees, publics)	4.5	4.6	.47
A public relations practitioner has a responsibility to serve as a liaison between an organization and its publics	4.4	4.5	1.21
A practitioner should analyze a situation and its possible solutions when making a decision	4.4	4.5	.76
Writing skills are the most important aspect of PR training	4.3	3.7	-5.52***
A public relations department/unit should strategically set goals and objectives prior to implementing a campaign	4.3	4.5	3.41**
A practitioner's activities are instrumental to the success of his/her organization	4.3	4.3	-.25
Without reservation, a practitioner should have direct contact with the company president or CEO	4.2	4.5	3.65***
Issue tracking helps to identify future problems that may affect the organization	4.1	4.2	1.45
Goal setting and development of strategies to meet those goals is important in everyday public relations practices	4.0	4.4	3.99***
An effective PR department/unit sets measurable objectives	4.0	4.4	4.07***
A practitioner is personally accountable for his/her productivity	4.0	4.2	1.42
An effective PR department/unit establishes methods to measure the success or failure of its objectives	3.9	4.3	4.81***
A practitioner should continue his/her education in public relations through academic training and/or professional skills and techniques	3.9	4.3	4.25***
A public relations practitioner has a strong influence over constituency satisfaction	3.8	3.8	-.22
The professional organizations' (PRSA, IABC, etc.) codes of ethics are appropriate	3.7	4.2	5.39***
Scanning research helps to identify important issues within the community	3.6	3.6	-.49
Intuition is a major part of decision making in PR	3.5	3.4	-.73
Management perceives the public relations role as more of a technician than manager	3.5	3.2	-2.21*
Research skills are essential for the PR practitioner	3.4	4.1	6.44***
Professional ethics codes lead to more socially responsible actions by practitioners	3.4	3.5	1.31
A practitioner's function is not just a job but also as a public service to the community	3.3	3.5	1.87
A liberal arts degree is appropriate training for public relations	3.3	3.5	1.63

Table 10 (cont'd.)

Comparisons of Means of Educators' Estimates of Practitioners' Opinions and Practitioners' Own Opinions About Standards

Professional standard	Mean for Educators	Mean for Practitioners	t-value
An effective public relations department/unit utilizes a Total Quality Management (TQM) process (or something similar)	3.3	3.3	.48
It should be left up to the individual to seek training that updates him/her about new technology in the field	3.3	3.3	-.51
A marketing degree is appropriate training for public relations	3.4	3.1	-2.42
A predominance of women in public relations leads to lower salaries for everyone	3.2	3.0	-1.92*
A public relations department/unit is too busy putting out fires to develop a long-term strategic plan	3.1	2.3	-5.74***
A business degree is appropriate training for public relations	3.1	2.7	-3.24**
The university from which you graduate affects the quality of the professional work you do	3.1	3.1	-.28
In some instances a practitioner's organization has found it necessary to deceive its publics	3.1	2.9	-1.31
Public relations planning is supported by most organizations	3.0	2.9	-1.12
Social scientific research is an accurate evaluation of the effectiveness of a public relations campaign	2.9	3.0	1.17
Public relations in most organizations is part of the decision-making team	2.9	2.7	-1.59
I have direct access to the top management of my organization	2.8	4.4	10.90***
Evaluation research is supported by most organizations	2.8	2.6	-1.23
Ethics committees of the professional organizations properly enforce the ethics codes	2.8	2.7	-.26
A public relations practitioner should advocate the client's perspective, no matter what it is	2.8	2.2	-5.44***
Social scientific research is necessary for excellence in PR	2.7	3.4	6.81***
There are no restrictions on the professional advancement of women	2.7	2.7	-.19
Social scientific research is cost-effective in PR campaigns	2.6	3.2	4.91***
Most practitioners have had formal instruction in management skills and techniques	2.5	2.3	-2.88*
My role in my organization is more of a technician than manager	2.3	2.2	.98
Regardless of race, everyone is being paid the same in the field of public relations	2.3	2.1	-1.43
Women and men in the field of PR are being paid equally	2.3	2.0	-3.13*
Public relations should be a licensed profession	2.2	2.56	2.57*

N = 251 practitioners, 127 educators.

* t-test significant at p < .05
** t-test significant at p < .001

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*** t-test significant at $p < .0001$

Critical Conflict Issues
in Public Relations Agency-Client Relationships

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RUNNING HEAD: PR AGENCY CONFLICT

Abstract

Critical Conflict Issues in Public Relations Agency-Client Relationships

Little research has been conducted to assess key issues in maintaining public relations agency-client relationships. This study investigated conflict issues considered significant to agencies and clients. Both sides tended to agree on conflict issues relevant to their relations, and recognized that neither side was above reproach. Factor analysis, however, pointed to an us-versus-them perspective with four Factors: Agency Work, Client Expectations, Client Communication and Client Financial Obligations.

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Critical Conflict Issues in Public Relations Agency-Client Relationships

"The agency business has been called one of the few where the difference between despair and ecstasy is a telephone call announcing that you have lost an old client or won a new one" (Croft, 1993, pp. 29-30). For many public relations firms,[1] much time and talent are funneled into pitching accounts, or selling the firm to potential clients. Many articles develop agency and client perspectives on the selection process and provide pointers both for landing the account (Bloomgarden & Binder, 1985; Conroy, 1987; Croft, 1989; Lukaszewski & Ridgeway, 1989), and for choosing the right agency (Barry, 1983; Dilenschneider & Jordan, 1991; Goldstein, 1986; Muller, 1980; Southard, 1991; Strenski, 1977; Warner, 1983).

Estimates suggest that firms can pay four times as much on new business than current business development ("New Business Approaches," 1992). The more successful relationships, according to agency lore, average 8 years with ranges of 6 months to 30 years (Lockett, 1980). For agencies, client losses can be worth millions of dollars in fees and reputation, not to mention lowered internal morale. Ultimately the very life of the agency itself is at stake. As one management consultant (Croft, 1993, p. 29) reported, "Today, with the trend toward largely project work, firms must fight the same battles over and over in an atmosphere of intense insecurity." For clients, account terminations affect time, budgets, and ongoing public relations programs (Arnold, 1990; Michell, 1986), and agency changes do not necessarily yield better services (Harris, 1992; Weilbacher, 1983).

Long-term relationships can be developed and maintained with the understanding that even though agencies and clients must work together, they will not always agree with each other. Conflict management, then, is critical

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[1] The words "firm" and "agency" will be used interchangeably herein, although the author recognizes concerns over the different connotations of "agency" versus "firm" established by various authors such as Nager & Truitt (1987).

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to the continued livelihood of the agency as is evidenced by numerous articles discussing means for evaluating or auditing the relationship and its products (Carrington, 1992; Croft, 1988b; Reisman, 1989; "Year in Review," 1992).

To assess what issues lead to and influence conflict in agency-client relationships, this study surveyed a sample of public relations firms and clients. The following defines conflict and agency theory as they relate to public relations agency-client relations, reviews the study of agency-client relationships, and presents an agency-client survey and its resulting data.

Literature Review

Success in the agency-client relationship has been defined by the Counselors Academy (1986, p. 13), a division of the Public Relations Society of America, as follows:

> A successful relationship between client and public relations firm is based on these fundamentals: the best match of capabilities to needs, total agreement on objectives, constant accessibility, full information sharing, continuous interaction, regular program and progress reviews, clear understanding of contract responsibilities and, of course underlying all, mutual trust and respect. Assemble these components and together you can build a strong, rewarding and lasting business relationship.

These fundamentals seemingly offer a simple formula for maintaining agency-client relationships. Central to this formula is communication, which, of course, is an area of public relations practitioner expertise. That public relations practitioners in the agency setting would have to be concerned with this simple formula seems a contradiction to their profession.

To understand this seeming contradiction, useful tools include examining relationship metaphors, which often reflect both figurative and literal qualities, and exploring what more precisely is meant by conflict (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991). One metaphor is the contract metaphor which establishes the relationship's parameters determined by the delegation of work to be conducted by some agency (literally, a firm, but also, employees, retailers, etc.) for a given principal. The contract metaphor is at the heart of agency theory. A derivative of research in economics and finance, the ultimate goal of agency theory is the ascertainment of the most efficient contract -- generally from the principal's perspectives -- based on the variables of environmental uncertainty, information availability, risk taking and costs (Bergen, Dutta & Walker, 1992). These variables represent potential sources of conflict.

The establishment and efficiency of a given contract are determined by two phases, labeled the pre-contractual and post-contractual factors. These factors have led to two models of agency theory reflecting the former in a "hidden information" model and the latter in a "hidden action" model (Bergen et al., 1992). In terms of public relations firm-client relationships, the hidden information model highlights the degree to which the principal cannot absolutely know whether prospective agencies can fulfill its expectations. The principal uses the agency selection process to reduce those uncertainties, to choose an agency with which it can achieve an efficient contract.

Methods to achieve the most efficient contract in the hidden information model include first, screening activities such as surveys, interviews, requests for proposals, competitive pitches and client recommendations. A second means of determining "hidden information" would be to listen for a firm to signal criteria it meets or is willing to assume responsibility for. Conversely, the client can provide sufficient information relative to its expectations which would allow the firm to determines its continued interest in account work for that principal (Bergen et al., 1992).

Once the agency is hired, the post-contractual or hidden action model focuses on the need to determine evaluations of and rewards for performance, the factors which determine agency retention or project completion (Bergen et al., 1992). The assumptions of this model are that each party in the relationship has its own self interest as a priority, each party will operate from an incomplete information base as self-interest may inhibit complete self disclosure, each party cannot absolutely predict the outcome of the relationship due to impinging environmental factors, and each party brings to the relationship different goals and risk preferences which affect recommended strategies.

Another factor in determining contract information is the attempt to understand the "unknown" or "differences in the unspoken expectations" which exist for each party and which affect behaviors and outcomes not specified in a contract (Bergen et al., 1992). Such unspoken expectations represent psychological contracts which co-exist with any formal relationship contracts. The unknown will exist despite inordinate amounts of time and money put into the precontract phases (Voros & Alvarez, 1981).

Evaluating and rewarding performance are, of course, reflected in part by agency retention which has led many firms to develop their own means, in addition to the contract, of getting at what their clients are thinking. While agency theory focuses on the principal in the relationship, it is the agency that generally has to pursue periodic feedback regarding client satisfaction (Pires, 1988). Evaluation points include quality of counsel, creativity, client contact, efficiency, media results, knowledge of the client's business and continued enthusiasm (Davis, 1983; Harris, 1992; Reisman, 1989). The contract metaphor substantiates the need for such audits and sets a basis for evaluating both goals and expectations. Nevertheless, the criteria for evaluating relationships have not been empirically established.

One means by which to develop evaluation criteria lies in conflict literature since the description of agency theory and its hidden information and hidden action models both highlight natural although not necessarily detrimental tensions between the firm and the client. Agency theory provides a grounding for isolating points of concern while conflict literature helps explain "efficient contract" ideals toward which agencies and clients can continually work.

Conflict is an opportunity to explore better public relations outcomes through productive conflict or conflict management (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991).

Conflict often has a negative connotation carrying the assumption it should be avoided or resolved; for example, several advertising agency-client relations studies have looked at "dysfunctional behavioral patterns" (Hotz, Ryans & Shanklin, 1982; Rhea & Massey, 1989; Wackman, Salmon & Salmon, 1986). When conflict, however, is viewed as being inherent to human relations (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991; Prior-Miller, 1989; Wehr, 1979), the study of conflict in the field of public relations can add new dimensions to the strategic management of problems and can furthermore improve results whether that conflict exists on an interpersonal or organizational level.

Hocker & Wilmot (1991, p. 12) offer the following definition:

> Conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from the other party in achieving their goals.

Productive conflict management implies that one or more of the definition's factors ultimately changes usually in a readily observable way. Hocker and Wilmot (1991, p. 38) wrote, "The residual impact is positive -- they are more willing to cooperate, able to have a more productive conflict the next time, and more satisfied with the result." Also important to the products of agency-client relations is the growth and creativity that can evolve from conflict management (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991). Morgan (1974, p. 112), an advertiser, recognized this creativity when he wrote, "... honest disagreement is healthy and can often produce a better idea than either party held in the first place." Even if immediate positive results are not apparent, having clients express their conflict or concerns can prevent exacerbation of what may be, at the outset, very minor issues ("Understanding," 1984b).

From an academic viewpoint, understanding conflict in client-counselor relations has many possibilities in the field of public relations and its application is not without precedent. Conflict as a theoretical base for understanding public relations has been suggested by several (Grunig & Hickson, 1976; Pavlik, 1987; Prior-Miller, 1989). The issue of conflict in

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public relations agency-client relations, however, has not been explored sufficiently.

To date, studies reported in public relations academic literature include a co-orientation analysis based on conflict, game and role theories (Pincus, Acharya, Trotter & St. Michel, 1991). A survey was used to assess conflict as it occurred in the public relations problem-solving process with results indicating substantial agreement between agencies and clients on three potential points of contention: target audiences, the plan's implementation, and costs.

Broom and Smith (1979) incorporated public relations role research into a study of how public relations roles would influence agency-client relations. Using students in mock agency-client relations, the authors suggested the "problem-solving process facilitator" received significantly higher ratings than other roles.

Bourland (1993) conducted a content analysis of Public Relations Journal articles related to public relations agencies and clients. She found that key issues recurring in the literature were mutual concerns of knowing each other's businesses (having expertise), contributing to agency-client communication, and maintaining financial obligations whether in billing or payment. The element of "chemistry" also defined as "liking" or respecting each other, or having compatibility appeared to be an underlying assumption of these recurrent concerns.

A handful of other studies reported in the professional literature warrant review here. All reviewed were only briefly reported in professional literature or texts, yet each gave indication of issues and trends relevant to the public relations agency business in general. First, in a 1979 survey, public relations practitioners at thirty of the largest U.S. companies indicated that 77 percent of them used public relations firms at that time (Voros & Alvarez, 1981). Their perceptions of counselor competence relative to particular public relations functions, yielded key concerns for marketing promotions, providing third-party objectivity, and serving as an early warning system for potential problems. Other high ranking issues included counselor work related to issues management, government relations, media relations as well as various forms of writing and campaign implementation.

Another of the surveys focused on counseling agency clients (Lehrman, 1987a). Client services listed included counseling; media, employee and investor relations; public affairs; and crisis and special event management. The three most often mentioned reasons for account termination were clients' finances, management changes or internal staff development.

Results of another survey presented to PRSA's Counselors Academy were derived from respondents (8% response rate) representing communication vice presidents of Fortune 500 companies ("Staff, Pitches," 1990). The agency-client issues rated as most important were quality of the staff representing the public relations firm and the perceived chemistry between the staff and the client, the agency presentation, conflict of interest, staff writing skills, counseling abilities, media contacts and projects proposed. Having experience in the client's business and research capabilities were "somewhat important." Less important (marked "not very important" or "unimportant") issues related to agency structure such as full service capabilities, networking systems, national and local offices, client lists, and advertising agency independence. Other less important issues were low bid, billing system, prestige, and ability to train the client's staff ("Staff, Pitches," 1990).

One final study, conducted by the Counselors Academy, surveyed PRSA's Corporate Section members ("A Look," 1991). Of the respondents, 72% said they used public relations firms. New firms were primarily added, according to the report, to meet specialized needs not served by the organization's current firm. New firms replaced firms in only 13% of the cases. Specific activities that firms were hired for were crisis management, media relations, legislative-regulatory work, product/service news, issues management, industry/trade releases, speechwriting, general news bureau, financial/investor relations, community relations, and employee communications.

The advertising agency-client relations literature has focused on various agency relationship concerns. Studies include techniques for winning and implications of new accounts (Mathur & Mathur, 1996; Wills, 1992), account maintenance (Beard, 1996; Michell & Sanders, 1995), and why agencies were selected (Cagley, 1986; Cagley & Roberts, 1984) or fired (Buchanan & Michell, 1991; Doyle, Corstjens & Michell, 1980; Henke, 1995; Michell, 1986; Michell, Cataquet & Hague, 1992).

The conclusions of these advertising studies indicated that for the most part, agencies and clients are in accord on various issues of conflict although significant differences were found in the amounts of accord, e.g., strongly agreeing versus agreeing (Cagley, 1986; Hotz et al., 1982; Michell, 1984a). Clients also tended to give generally good ratings to agency performance (Beard, 1996; Ryan & Colley, 1967). LaBahn (1996), however, did report a gap in agency and client perceptions of agency behaviors categorized as agency diligence (in correcting problems) and agency co-operativeness (dedication to clients and their objectives).

Other results of the various studies can be presented according to the breakdown offered by Wackman, Salmon and Salmon (1986). In their study of advertising agency-client relations, the researchers categorized potential agency-based conflict items into four areas: Work Product representing statements related to output and potential output; Work Pattern, or factors affecting how work is accomplished; Organizational Factors encompassing structure, policies, politics and personnel; and Relationship or the chemistry including low agency personnel turnover, good relations with account service people, and strong leadership.

A number of studies emphasized the relationship factor or agency-client chemistry as important regardless of whether the focus was on firm selection, or account maintenance or termination (Cagley, 1986; Cagley & Roberts, 1984; Michell, 1984a; Wackman et al., 1986). For example, Wackman et al., found the relationship to be the primary predictor of satisfaction with the agency as well as with the agency's creative work. And Beard (1996) indicated that relationship outcomes were significantly affected by client representative role ambiguity.

While both agencies and advertisers considered "people factors" as very important, the agencies rated relationship items more highly than the advertisers who focused more on the creativity issues or market research, considered work products (Cagley, 1986; Murphy & Maynard, 1996). Others, too, have found that clients were generally more concerned with agency performance (Frey & Davis, 1958; Michell, 1986; Verbeke, 1989). However, Wackman et al., (1986) found that clients' perceptions of good, creative work, or agency performance, were predicted by good personal relationships, along with strong leadership, productive meetings, and clear assignments of responsibilities. Henke's (1995) research suggested that high client satisfaction with the agency's creative work may well be a signal of account termination as the account may be secured primarily through the client's impression of the agency's creative ability, but the account is maintained through agency performance. Other work products of apparent concern related to the agency's use of research and its knowledge of the client's business (Cagley, 1986; Verbeke, 1989; Wackman et al., 1986).

Issues of work pattern that factored out as more important or of higher concern were the need for information sharing; accessible account executives (Hotz et al, 1982), and meeting deadlines (Hotz et al., 1982; Weilbacher, 1981). Factors related to agency management focused on issues related to billings (Hotz et al., 1982; Pincus et al., 1991; Wackman et al., 1986), and personnel experience (Cagley, 1986); whereas the client management issues included approval levels (Hotz et al., 1982; Weilbacher, 1981). Most studies concluded by suggesting the incorporation of various forms of evaluations or audits (Doyle et al., 1980; Michell, 1984b, 1986; Ryan & Coley, 1967).

While most of the research focused on which of these issues were more important and how agencies' and clients' perceptions differed, a few included quantitative factors which to some extent address organizational issues. For example, Hotz et al. (1982) found that longevity of relationships resulted in little impact on how conflict items were ranked. Verbeke (1989) similarly determined that average relationship length (4 years) produced no significantly different evaluations. In terms of size, Evans' (1973) examination of three different-sized agencies concluded that size did not affect agency management. He did note that the large agency's management style was more bureaucratic while the small agency's was more innovative.

Based on these results, the following research questions are proposed for the study of conflict in public relations agency-client relationships. Research questions, rather than hypotheses, are used herein since this study is exploratory in the sense that it is seeking relationships rather than testing them. To examine the dimensions of conflict in agency-client relationships, this study will attempt to answer the following research questions: (1) Which items are most closely identified in association with conflict by agencies? by clients? (2) Are there significant differences in how the agencies and clients perceive conflict issues? (3) Are the views of agencies and clients multidimensional entailing a number of distinct factors? (4) To what extent do agencies' and clients' attitudes toward conflict vary according to "demographic" factors?

Method

With more research on agency-client relationships in the advertising literature, an advertising study (Hotz et. al, 1982) was used as a framework for similar investigation of public relations agency-client relationships. Naturally, some of the conflict issues in the advertising agency-client relations literature can be applied directly to public relations firms. Other particular items of conflict, such as media commissions or media placement, are not so readily applicable -- at least not to firms with a pure public relations base of practice.

The subjects for this study were agencies and their clients. Public relations firms were selected in a random sampling, using interval selection with a random starting point, from O'Dwyer's Directory of Public Relations Firms. The clients' names were randomly chosen during the interval sampling used to generate the firms' names, since O'Dwyer's Directory of Public Relations Firms includes selected listings of firms' clients.

This sampling method had inherent disadvantages since O'Dwyer's does not include client addresses and does not always include specific divisions represented by the firm. The addresses of the clients were determined first by checking various directories and followed by reviewing phone listings based on the firm's location. For the remaining addresses not located (n=17), the firms themselves were contacted or were sent the client survey for distribution. The agency as the liaison to the client was used only as a last resort to make contact with the client.

Three sections of the questionnaire led the respondent from questions about the organization, to questions about firm-client relations, and finally to a few questions about the individual himself or herself. The questions in particular addressed public relations firm-client relationship issues, demographic data (size, billings, ...), and a few general conflict-related questions.

All recipients were asked to respond to an identical set of public relations agency-client conflict statements derived from the content analysis of firm-related articles in Public Relations Journal (Bourland, 1993). Since several of the most mentioned sources of public relations firm-client conflict were not represented in the Hotz et al., (1982) advertising study, the conflict items list for the survey was modified by adding the top ranking (most mentioned) items from the content analysis.

The conflict issues, following the Hotz et al. (1982) model, were incorporated as statements for scaled, Likert-type responses. This study used five levels: responses were to be based on the firm or client CEOs' agreement or disagreement with the issues as significant or insignificant to firm-client relationships. To reduce the possibility of the respondents' denying conflict or only blaming the other party, the directions emphasized that others had already identified these items as possible conflict issues.

So that responses paralleled the directions, the scaled responses read: "Please circle VS if you think the problem is very significant to PR firm-

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client relationships ..., and VI for very insignificant." The perception of "significance" rather than "agreement" was used since the items being evaluated were assumed to be conflict items a priori, having been identified as such from the content analysis of the professional literature.

The 35 conflict items were randomized and divided into two groups: conflict attributed to clients and to firms. While this adds an obvious division, it was necessary to break the items into more manageable units for the respondents. This was not seen as introducing an artificial artifact to the study since the statements already specified the client or the firm as the source of the conflict issue. In hopes of generating thought rather than finger pointing, the clients were asked to evaluate the sources of conflict attributed to themselves first, and the firms were asked to evaluate themselves first as well.

The survey was pre-tested by practitioners representing agencies and clients. All represented diverse agency and client organizations in terms of the types of organizations, their sizes, and their locations. In general, those interviewed responded positively to the questionnaire and the conflict issues. Only minor changes in wording were suggested and were subsequently utilized to improve clarity.

The questionnaire was sent along with a separate cover letter and was preceded by postcard notification. Since an attempt was made to track pairings of agencies and clients, all questionnaires included a code number; the cover letter still assured confidentiality since respondents were considered "test savvy." A second mailing followed to those who had not responded.

The total sample based on letters apparently delivered was 296 firms and 288 clients, out of an initial 303 attempted for each. The total return rate was 35% or 205 questionnaires; of these, 119 (40%) were firm respondents and 86 (30%) were client respondents. The number of usable returns, however, dropped considerably for clients as many declined to participate citing company policy as the reason. Usable client questionnaires had an approximate 24% response rate, dropping the total number to 68 questionnaires. This is consistent with a 21% response rate achieved from a PRSA survey of its Corporate Section members ("A Look," 1991). Return rates for clients have been as low as 8%, reported in a survey of Fortune 500 communication vice presidents ("Staff, Pitches," 1990).

Usable firm questionnaires numbered 112, or about 38%, down only 2%. Most firms, however, were very helpful; several called, added notes or included agency materials (client lists, firm pamphlets, etc.).

Results

The first two research questions ask about which conflict issues emerge as most important or significant. The results outlined in Table 1 are based on responses to the set of 35 five-point Likert-type statements. The highest mean score was a 4.42 with a 5 being equated with a very significant issue, and the lowest was a 2.98 translated according to the survey as neither significant nor insignificant. It is interesting to note that both agencies and clients had similar ranges in responses, but agencies tended to score the items slightly higher, or as more significant conflict issues, than did the clients. The agency response range was 3.15 to 4.42, and the client response range was 2.98 to 4.18. Table 1 identifies the ranked order of conflict items according to agency responses, with corresponding ranks and means for the client responses.

Of the issues identified, agencies and clients agreed, at least within 3 ranking points, on 11 items, including a mid-range position for agency-client chemistry (ranked at 15 by agency scores, and 16.5 by client scores). Most similar within the top "10" issues were the client being inaccessible (first for agencies, second for clients); the client not sharing information (agency ranking of 4, client 3); unsatisfactory agency work (agency 7, client 7.5); and the agency missing its budget (agency 10.5, client 9). Identical rankings occurred for the agency being understaffed (14) and unfair agency billing (22). The issues that both agencies and clients perceived as less significant to their relationship included the client blaming the agency (agency 27, client 25.5), and the client being too demanding (agency 34, client 35). The

Table 1

Comparison of Agency and Client Subsample Views of Significant Conflict Issues in the Agency-Client Relationship

Conflict Item	Agency View Rank	Agency View Mean	Client View Rank	Client View Mean
	(*n* = 112)		(*n* = 68)	
Client inaccessible	1	4.421	2	4.161
Poor client communication	2	4.343	15	3.855**
Agency doesn't follow through	3	4.269	7.5	4.031
Client doesn't share information	4	4.262	3	4.113
Agency doesn't listen	5	4.250	10.5	3.984
Poor agency communication	6	4.231	12	3.891
Agency work unsatisfactory	7	4.204	7.5	4.031
Client is not candid	8	4.198	20	3.661***
Client lacks objectives	9	4.159	13	3.871*
Agency misses budget	10.5	4.102	9	4.000
Agency misses deadlines	10.5	4.102	4	4.094
Client is indecisive	12	4.093	1	4.177
Client does not trust agency	13	4.075	16.5	3.774
Agency is understaffed	14	4.046	14	3.859
No agency-client chemistry	15	4.000	16.5	3.774
No agency accountability	16	3.981	18	3.750
Agency staff is inexperienced	17.5	3.907	5	4.078
Client top-managers uninvolved	17.5	3.907	27	3.492*
Client doesn't pay	19	3.860	33	3.129***

	Agency View		Client View	
Conflict Item	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean
Client does not understand PR	20	3.820	31	3.295**
Too many client approval levels	21	3.785	23	3.565
Unfair agency billing	22	3.731	22	3.578
Weak agency strategy	23.5	3.722	10.5	3.984
Client expectations too high	23.5	3.722	29	3.403*
Hidden client agenda	25	3.720	32	3.258*
High agency turnover	26	3.657	21	3.656
Client blames agency	27	3.645	25.5	3.492
Agency not up on client business	28	3.630	6	4.047*
Client insensitive to firm money	29	3.617	34	3.000***
Agency is inflexible	30	3.602	24	3.563
Agency is defensive	31	3.489	25.5	3.500
Agency is unstructured	32	3.435	28	3.484
Lack of agency research	33	3.343	19	3.667
Client is too demanding	34	3.271	35	2.984
Agency is into politics	35	3.150	30	3.391

Note. Means are derived from responses to 5-point, Likert-type scales with 5 representing the conflict issues as very significant and 1 as very insignificant to agency-client relations.

*$p < .05$. ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$.

remaining issues ranked similarly were lack of agency accountability (agency 16, client 18) and too many approval levels at the client organization (agency 21, client 23). One issue, agency turnover, was the only item perceived in nearly identical terms according to the means (approximately 3.66 for each).

As mentioned, however, clients tended to rate items as a little less significant to the agency-client relationship than did the agencies. When comparing mean scores, clients viewed 9 of the agency issues as less significant, 5 as more significant (inexperienced agency staff, agency not understanding the client's business, weak agency strategy, lack of agency research, and agency into politics -- in descending order of significance) and 4 were approximately the same. Of note, all but one client conflict issue -- the client is indecisive -- were perceived as less significant by clients than by their agency counterparts.

The differences in agency and client perceptions which were determined to be statistically significant ($p < .001$) were the client not being candid, the client not paying and the client being insensitive to agency finances. These as well as the items which were statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level all focused on conflict issues attributed to the client as seen in Table 1. Even at the lower probability level of $p < .05$, only the response to oneagency-attributed issue yielded a significant difference, and that was the agency not knowing the client's business. Ten of the 35 issues scored by agencies and clients supported a significant difference although it is recognized that some statistical significance, by chance, will occur as more items are subjected to t-tests (Norusis, 1991).

The third and fourth research questions take into account all the conflict issues and ask whether there is a better way to describe them as groups of issues and if so, are certain variables associated with such groupings. To examine the relationship among the battery of conflict issues, they were first subjected to Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. This test yielded uniform, positive and highly significant relationships between the various conflict issues. Because of the high correlations, these issues were factor analyzed using oblique rotation.

After 19 iterations, four factors emerged, as reported in Table 2, which accounted for approximately 66% of the total variance in the combined agency-client views of conflict. Conflict issues loading at .4 and higher were retained for factor interpretation. With 19 divergent items loading on the first factor, it is hard to assign a factor name to pinpoint specifically what the items have in common whereas the relationship of the 2 items on Factor 4 is markedly clear. Central to each of the 4 Factors, however, is a sharp dichotomy in the factor items based on whether the conflict is attributed to the agency or the client.

Factor 1 includes 19 issues that are all conflict issues attributed to the agency. For this reason, it can be broadly named "Agency Work." Also, in this first factor is the only conflict item in which the source of the conflict is attributed to both agency and client -- agency-client chemistry, suggesting this relationship issue is seen more in line with the agency.

The second factor is composed of 6 conflict issues, all attributed to the client. The issues loading on this factor appear to revolve around the expectations of the client such as client having expectations that are too high, being too demanding, and blaming the agency; as well as the client not understanding public relations, having too many approval levels and lacking objectives. Most of these were items listed under the Wackman, Salmon & Salmon (1986) Relationship category described earlier. Lacking objectives was in the Work Product category, but can easily be tied to expectations in that if a client does not know what it needs or wants to accomplish, and if the client does not understand public relations, then any agency would have a difficult time at best meeting that client's objectives. This factor, then, is referred to as "Client Expectations."

The third factor includes 4 client-attributed conflict issues, and the fourth includes 2. Issues on the third factor relate to the client being indecisive, inaccessible, and generally uncommunicative. "Client Communication" best describes this factor, especially when assuming that a lack of communication can also be a consequence of indecisiveness. Wackman et al. (1986) categorized these issues as belonging to Work Pattern.

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Table 2

Conflict Factors for Combined Agency and Client Views

		Factors			
Item	Communalities	1	2	3	4
		(n = 180)			
	Agency-Attributed Conflict Issues/Factors				
Misses deadlines	.81	**.91**	-.19	.01	-.13
Unsatisfactory work	.77	**.86**	-.14	-.06	-.11
Into politics	.67	**.82**	.09	.22	-.10
Unaccountable	.73	**.81**	-.04	-.07	-.06
Inflexible	.68	**.78**	-.18	-.15	-.07
Misses budget	.72	**.78**	-.09	-.07	-.16
Does not do research	.64	**.77**	.23	.14	.14
Bills unfairly	.69	**.77**	.00	.00	-.14
Poor communication	.80	**.77**	-.21	-.25	-.13
Does not listen	.75	**.75**	-.12	-.26	-.04
Low follow through	.81	**.75**	-.08	-.21	-.15
Weak strategy	.67	**.75**	.24	.14	.00
Unstructured	.70	**.73**	.27	.18	-.06
Client work inexperience	.58	**.72**	.06	-.15	.37
Inexperienced staff	.68	**.71**	.11	-.18	.11
Defensive	.57	**.67**	.18	.02	-.01
High turnover	.56	**.58**	.28	-.10	.16
Understaffed	.62	**.56**	.13	-.28	.02
Lack of chemistry	.52	**.47**	.00	-.17	-.28

Item	Communalities	Factors 1	2	3	4
Client-Attributed Conflict Issues/Factors					
Too high of expectations	.62	.03	**.71**	-.20	.05
Too demanding	.56	.04	**.69**	.06	-.14
Does not understand PR	.54	-.06	**.57**	-.24	-.19
Blames agency.	.61	.38	**.50**	.11	-.17
Too many approval levels	.45	-.04	**.49**	-.26	-.16
Lacks objectives	.67	.13	**.44**	-.44	-.06
Indecisiveness	.68	.10	.12	**-.77**	.13
Inaccessible	.67	.06	.04	**-.72**	-.14
Low information sharing	.71	.09	.12	**-.69**	-.14
Poor communication	.72	.14	.09	**-.50**	-.39
Insensitive to firm money	.66	-.01	.17	-.09	**-.71**
Does not pay promptly	.68	.17	.10	-.02	**-.70**
Factor Values					
Eigenvalue		17.6	2.7	1.5	1.1
Percent of Variance		50.5	7.6	4.2	3.3
Cumulative Variance		50.5	58.0	62.2	65.5

Note. **Boldfaced** numbers = highest loadings.

The fourth factor clearly pinpoints "Client Financial Obligations" with the issues of the client being insensitive to the agency's finances and the client not paying promptly. These issues would be classified within the Client Management category.

The only issues not appearing on any of the factor loadings were all client-attributed items. They were the client is not candid, the client has a hidden agenda, the client's top management is not involved, and the client does not trust the agency. The first 3 of these 4 were found to be significantly different when means for clients and agencies were tested. This analysis seemed to emphasize that agencies and clients combined have opposing views regarding conflict or at least its point of origination. The combined agency-client results, however, should be interpreted with some caution with a client subsample of $\underline{n} = 68$.

To ascertain a measure of reliability of these factors, the data were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha. A reliability index was not attained because of missing values within the agency and client responses.[2]

Using the combined agency and client Factors 1-4 as dependent variables, stepwise regression analyses were conducted to determine whether predispositions toward the relationship as well as any other independent variables might explain the groupings. Indices were created using items loading on a given factor, with factor means computed for use in the regression equations. Stepwise regression tests were run first for the independent variables obtained from both agencies and clients. This was followed by two separate regression analyses for the independent variables associated with agencies and then clients.

Variables entered into the combined regression equation were the organization's income and age, the respondent's gender and tenure with the organization, and total staff size. Also used were four Likert statements based on perceptions of agency satisfaction with client and client satisfaction with agency, the perception of cooperativeness in the relationship, and the perception of whether conflict can contribute to positive results.

None of the combined agency-client variables served as significant predictors for Factors 1, 2 and 4. Factor 3 - Client Communication could be explained in part by responses to perceptions of agency satisfaction with the client, as shown in Table 3. Lower perceived agency satisfaction predicted more significance assigned to the Client Communication Factor.

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[2] Missing values, coded according to SPSS, result in deletion of cases (listwise or pairwise) which affects the program's ability to continue various statistical analyses (Norusis, 1992).

Table 3

Combined Agency-Client Views: A Summary of Stepwise Regression Results for the Combined Agency-Client Factor 3 - Client Communication

Variable	Percent Variance (n = 180)	Beta
Agency Satisfaction with Client	8	-.2857*

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

A second set of stepwise regression analyses was run, using the same method, to elucidate agency subsample predictors for the combined agency-client factors. Independent variables entered into this second regression analysis were the four Likert relationship and conflict attitude statements; the agency's age and income; the respondent's gender and tenure with the firm; agency staff size and turnover rates; the number of retainer and project clients, and average longevity for each; the proportion of agency income determined by commissions; and the proportion of agency income determined by the largest client billing. No significant predictors emerged for Factor 3 - Client Communication. Results from the regression analyses for Factors 1, 2 and 4 are reported in Table 4.

Nearly 18% of the variance for Factor 1 - Agency Work could be determined by the agency respondent's gender. The female respondents from the agencies were more likely to see Agency Work issues as more significant conflict items than were their male counterparts. Ratings of the importance of Factor 2 - Client Expectations could be predicted in part by the number of retainer clients. In this case, the fewer the number of retainer clients the more significant were the conflict issues associated with Client Expectations. Table 4 also shows that 31% of the variance for Factor 4 - Client Financial Obligations could be explained by the proportion of agency income determined by commissions, and by the number of retainer clients. Again, the fewer the

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number of retainer clients, the more significant was Client Financial Obligations. Also predicting Client Financial Obligations as a significant factor was lower income proportion based on commissions.

Table 4

The Agency Subsample's Views: A Summary of Stepwise Regression Results for the Combined Agency and Client Factors

Variable	Percent Variance (Cumulative) (n = 112)	Beta
Factor 1 - Agency Work		
Gender	18	.4222*
Factor 2 - Client Expectations		
Number of Retainer Accounts	14	-.3486*
Factor 4 - Client Financial Obligations		
Income Proportion from Commissions	18	-.4241*
Number of Retainer Accounts	31	-.3611*

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

A third set of regression analyses followed to evaluate the predictive value of client variables regarding agency-client conflict factors derived from the complete sample. Because of missing values, significant predictors were found neither with the default listwise deletion of missing values nor with the pairwise treatment for missing values (Norusis, 1992). To determine potential predictors for future research purposes, the means were substituted for missing variables recognizing, of course, that this could dilute the results. Variables entered into this stepwise model were the organization's age, staff size and income; the respondent's gender and tenure with the organization; the four Likert-scaled relationship and conflict attitude statement responses; the number of firms hired by the organization; the number of years with the organization's primary firm, as well as the estimated average number of years spent with an agency; and agency costs. These results are presented cumulatively in Table 5.

For Factor 1 - Agency Work, approximately 33% of the variance could be explained by agency costs, client's attitude toward conflict, the client's perception of agency satisfaction with client, and the client's perception of client satisfaction with the agency. Agency work was seen as a more significant conflict factor when agency costs were lower, when conflict was viewed as more negative than positive, when the client perceived the agency was satisfied with its client relationship, and when the client reported lower client satisfaction with the agency.

Attitude toward conflict also served as a significant predictor for Factor 2 - Client Expectations. Again, the more negative the view of conflict, the more likely were the client respondents to rate Client Expectations as a significant conflict factor. Similarly, client respondents who viewed conflict as negative were more likely to see Factor 3 - Client Communication as more significant to agency-client conflict. Additionally, the less the client paid the agency, the more likely were client communication issues to be significant to conflict. Finally, agency costs also served as a predictor for Factor 4 - Client Financial Obligations. Table 5 reflects that the less the client pays its agency, the more likely it is to see payment issues as problems.

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Table 5

The Client Subsample's Views: A Summary of Stepwise Regression Results for the Combined Agency and Client Factors

Variable	Percent Variance (Cumulative) (n = 68)	Beta
Factor 1 - Agency Work		
Agency Costs	13	-.2812*
Conflict Attitude	22	-.3059**
Agency Satisfaction with client	28	.3132**
Client Satisfaction with Agency	33	-.2576*
Factor 2 - Client Expectations		
Conflict Attitude	11	-.3286**
Factor 3 - Client Communication		
Conflict Attitude	11	-.2936*
Agency Costs	18	-.2670*
Factor 4 - Client Financial Obligations		
Agency Costs	6	-.2447*

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Conclusions

For the most part, the results indicate that clients and agencies agree on conflict issues relevant to their relationships. While the natural tendency would be to blame the other party when conflict arises, both sides recognize their own shortcomings. Nevertheless, factor analysis results suggest a rather dichotomous, us-versus-them perspective with agency- or client-attributed conflict issues as the most obvious commonality among factor loadings. The results also suggest that agencies are more sensitive to some issues than clients, and vice versa.

For example, based on the agency's and client's differences on the conflict issues, it is evident that agency respondents were more sensitive to monetary issues. On the client side of originating conflict, agencies indicated that the client not paying (mean 3.86, rank 19) and the client being insensitive to agency funding (mean 3.62, rank 29) were more significant than what was indicated by the clients (who rated the same issues, respectively, as 33 and 34 by rank, and 3.13 and 3.0 by means). However, financial-based conflict issues originating from the agency side were viewed more similarly. The two issues were the agency missing the budget (agency mean 4.1, rank 10.5; client mean 4.0, rank 9) and unfair agency billing (agency mean 3.73, and client mean 3.58, and rank 22 for both).

Part of the problem with a list of 35 conflict issues is determining which are causes, which are reactions, and which are symptoms. For example, high agency turnover or a client not communicating can lead to an agency's inability to meet deadlines. The client not being candid or not sharing information can cause the agency to produce unsatisfactory work. Or if the agency does not listen, the agency could certainly have the impression that the client is too demanding or has expectations that are too high.

The factor analysis was one way of reducing data and determining relationships among the 35 conflict issues. Four factors emerged from the combined responses of agencies and clients: Agency Work, Client Expectations, Client Communication and Client Financial Obligations. The factors supported critical themes extracted in a content analysis of Public Relations Journal articles (Bourland, 1993). The factors were also similar to the Hotz et al., (1982) survey of advertising agencies and clients ($\underline{n}$ = 67). Related factors from the public relations survey results were Agency Work, Client Communication and Client Expectations. It is also of interest that Client Financial Obligations emerged as a factor in the public relations survey, but not in the advertising survey.

Central to these factors is their dichotomous orientation; i.e., they grouped more by the point of origin for the conflict rather than by similar topics for both agencies and clients such as monetary concerns, communication or staffing, or by Wackman's et al. (1986) categories. This dichotomy reveals varying power struggles between the two groups. The recognized existence of conflict between agencies and clients precludes the existence of power structures which vary over time. According to Hocker & Wilmot (1991, p. 74), "If people have no influence over each other, they cannot participate in conflict together, since their communication would have no impact." Assumptions of power correspond with the assumptions of conflict: power is always present, it is neither good nor bad, it results from interaction with others, people aspire to a balance of power, both sides can develop their own power resources for power balancing, and power balancing is requisite for positive conflict management (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991).

Power balancing can be seen more readily by focusing on power currencies, the value of which is determined by how important a currency is to another person. Hocker & Wilmot (1991, p. 75) wrote, "Conflict is often confusing because people try to spend currency that is not valued in the particular relationship." Power currencies are classified by Hocker & Wilmot (1991) as expertise, resource control, interpersonal linkages and communication skills. These power currencies are comparable to the four factors resulting from the factor analysis of the agency and client responses.

Taking a broad interpretation of the factors, Factor 1 - Agency Work represents the expertise of the agency and the necessary work habits to implement the public relations strategies recommended. Specific expertise concerns loading on this factor included the conflict issues of knowledge of the client's business and research in general, strategic ability, and actual work produced. Additionally, skills such as meeting deadlines and staying within budget enable the agency to apply and produce its expertise in more tangible forms. Since other issues related to agency staffing and management loaded on this factor, it is not an exact or pure parallel of expertise. Nevertheless, all items on this factor are agency-based, and the agency is generally hired for its expertise, a currency the client needs. Power currency corollaries in comments from survey respondents include: "They (clients) try to do things themselves they're not qualified to do" and the clients being "jealous of their turf." From the client side came responses related to whether the agency utilized client in-house capabilities, which could also be tied to resources.

The second power currency, resource control, goes directly to Factor 4, the client's financial obligations. Accentuating the agency's dependency on the client are two items: the client not paying promptly and the client lacking concern for its firm's finances. Withholding checks, delaying payment, not providing advances for contracted services such as artwork or printing are all resources within the client's control. These resources, furthermore, can be meted out as rewards or punishments. One agency survey respondent commented, "Clients want things immediately or yesterday. They want to pay 45-90 days later -- no balance."

The third power currency is interpersonal linkages defined as being "central to communication exchange" (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991, p. 76). The agency's account executive and client liaison both gain power in their respective organizations because of this currency. The factor analysis counterpart is Factor 2 - Client Expectations. These expectations are central to communication exchange and the resulting performance. Since these liaisons are not always the final decision makers, the potential for not meeting client expectations is amplified. Issues from this factor include too many client approval levels; different expectations reflected in the client having too high of expectations, being too demanding, blaming the agency, and not understanding public relations; and a lack of clear-cut objectives. When expectations are not met, clients and agencies can ask for different liaisons or look for other partnerships. In some cases, the liaisons may be unclear; e.g., one agency respondent reported, "Sometimes there are too many people at a client (organization) giving input; therefore the effort is disjointed and unfocused. There needs to be someone 'in charge' at a client (organization) as much as at the PR firm." The linkage currency, of course, also related to

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Factor 3 - Client Communication, since communication is central to the liaison function.

The fourth power currency involves communication skills which largely determine interpersonal power (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991) and directly coincide with Factor 3 - Client Communication. Items loading on this factor are communication-based items or issues that would have a direct impact on the two-way communication process. The four items are the client being inaccessible or unwilling to provide time to the firm, the client not providing timely and accurate information, the client being indecisive, and the client maintaining poor communication with the firm. Agency respondents emphasized the need for their clients "to keep us in the loop." One defined this as "synergy -- work quickly to get information in/out," which helps everyone in the relationship. All of these are power currencies which, when used by the client or the agency, can render the other party powerless.

In general, the public relations agencies scored issues as more significant to the relationship than did the clients. The differences in views underscore the agency as the subordinate in the relationship. Their dependency on the relationship may lend greater sensitivity to conflict issues.

The conflict factors and their item loadings as well as the regression results for attitudes toward the relationship underscore that power is derived directly from the relationship. Agencies and clients can be empowered when both parties recognize their interdependence. Both parties must also understand that power levels will fluctuate and will not always be equal. Long-term relationships come with these realizations and with mutual views of equitable power balancing (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991).

Contracts as per agency theory can prove helpful by pinning down some of the expectations such as those conflict issues which achieved a high combined ranking (work product, deadlines, budgets, objectives, and two-way communication processes). Based on these results, client financial obligations need to be absolutely clear, and it is essential to detail billing procedures in writing.

Limitations of the study itself include the reliance on O'Dwyer's Directory which although is the most extensive listing available is not entirely complete, and is designed to serve profit interests rather than public relations service motives. Moreover, this study used client names listed in O'Dwyer's for the purpose of obtaining paired agency-client data. O'Dwyer's, however, lists only client names and no addresses. Because several clients said that they did not use an agency, paired analysis was not conducted since there was no assurance that a client respondent was actually a client of the corresponding agency. Serendipitous findings of this research project relate to an agency's client lists as follows: first, it appears many agencies carry clients on their lists which they may not have represented on an official, contractual basis; some agencies list clients whom they may not have represented for many years; and some agencies carry large corporate names on their lists when, in fact, they may have only represented a small division outside of headquarters.

Difficulties in tracking down the client quite probably affected the return rate on the client side, and thus limited the types of analysis that could be done and the conclusions which could be made. And while one of the strengths of the agency survey resided in the fact that so many of the respondents were senior-level practitioners (which also served as an indicator of practitioner interest in the topic), some might also argue that senior-level agency practitioners tend to be somewhat removed from the day-to-day agency-client conflict due to agency demands for business management and new business development.

Naturally, as with any survey, the possibility exists that someone other than a senior-level member of the staff responded to issues. Other limitations relate to the subject under investigation. Respondents may have experienced evaluation apprehension and opted to protect their firms or organizations by suggesting little to no conflict which is a completely unrealistic scenario (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994).

Future studies should take into consideration these limitations and especially helpful would be an ability to conduct paired analysis. This, however, would require soliciting client names and addresses from the client's public relations firm. Naturally the firm's bias in selecting a client would have to be taken into account. Future agency-client relationship studies, furthermore, should account for feelings of powerfulness and powerlessness in the relationship as a predictor of conflict attitudes. And Johnson's (1989) suggested study on consultant roles based on coorientation analysis is worth pursuing.

In conclusion, based on the limited public relations firm research, this study modeled itself after those exploring advertising agency-client relations. This research project provided empirical data to augment the experiential-based descriptions of firm-client relationships. In general, conflict factors supported the key themes of knowing each other's business, developing two-way communication and maintaining financial obligations derived from the content analysis of the professional literature.

The mere process of recognizing power currencies can be of immense value to the agencies. Conflict analysis also allows them to plan ahead to meet expectations through contracts and more rigorous and regular evaluation of relationships. Clients, too, can benefit in terms of having their expectations met by understanding account management basics from both sides. Perhaps most important in setting up relationships in the first place is recognizing critical agency-client relationship variables during the pre-contractual or hidden information model postulated by Bergen et al., (1992). In particular, agencies and clients should attempt to ascertain the willingness of both sides to recognize the interdependent nature of their relationships and the need to approach clients' objectives as a team. Concerns over firm stability and public relations accountability dictate a better understanding of agency-client relations to enable and empower practitioners to manage conflict in productive ways. The first step toward understanding conflict in agency-client relations is realizing that conflict, in whatever manifestation, will occur regardless and that it can be beneficial. Rogers, (1980, p. 214) wrote,

> The very nature of the public relations business calls for me to face a new challenge every day, to solve a new problem, to deal with a new unpredictable client. The very nature of my business puts me in daily situations with clients that involve their emotions, their demands, their whims, their sound business judgment, their irrationality -- in short, the whole complex range of talent and temperament that makes them as successful as they are in the corporate and show business world.

Understanding conflict extends beyond firms as more public relations departments operate as "internal agencies" for other departments within their organizations (Awad, 1985; Cantor, 1985; Marcus, 1986). The vitality of the firm, whether internal or external, depends on its ability to retain clients, its ability to manage conflict, and as Burger (1983, p. 5) wrote, "A firm without clients is an uncertainty, not a business."

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Evaluation and Assessment of a Service Learning Component in Academia: A Case Study

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RUNNING HEAD: Service Learning

Abstract

Evaluation and Assessment of a Service Learning Component in Academia: A Case Study

Many faculty incorporate service learning projects into their classes, yet have few means by which to present this material in annual evaluations and assessment. With assessment becoming increasingly important, institutions of higher education must find assessment measures for service which may not typically get much attention. This case study relates one method for quantifying service learning using the analogy of an agency with billable hours to generate an economic impact statement for service learning projects. Interviews with students were also conducted to provide some measure of student outcomes relevant to the use of service learning projects as a form of pedagogy.

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Evaluation and Assessment of a Service Learning Component in Academia: A Case Study

Much attention is given to documenting teaching and research at colleges. While debate continues on the effectiveness of various methods, the means for evaluating these two classic missions of universities are fairly well established. Research is judged by numbers of conference papers, articles, books, while teaching is reflected in student and peer evaluations. Another traditional mission is service, particularly that related to the field, but service-related work is often relegated to a broad consulting category to be perhaps counted or generally noted during annual evaluations.

The need to identify means by which to both qualify and quantify service components provided by the university increases in importance when considering that annual assessment efforts are being mandated by states across the country. Moreover, service often crosses various areas including teaching, research and personal development (Mettetal & Bryant, 1996).

The issues of both assessment and service learning are characterized by McDaniel (1994) as megatrends portending a paradigm shift in academia. The four related megatrends identified were labeled Total Quality Management, Intrinsic Motivation (re-evaluating reward systems), Service Learning and

Authentic Assessment. McDaniel wrote of service learning (1994, p. 29):

> Service learning will shift our models of the college curriculum in ways that will require faculty members to reconsider how we are to relate the goals of liberal learning to applied areas of "service" and to design curriculum that integrates the theory and practice of service learning by balancing field experiences with academic experiences. Professors will also need to develop more flexible schedules and assignments to accommodate individual interests and to coordinate academic knowledge and skills with human relations and communication skills required in service learning.

This paper describes one means of documenting a student-faculty project defined as service learning. The method uses a public relations firm paradigm as a means of estimating economic benefits derived by one nonprofit group from public relations students enrolled in a one-credit hour practical experience (practicum). This analysis will begin with a discussion of service learning and assessment.

Literature Review

In assessing the body of knowledge relative to service learning, Shumer and Bebas (1996) relate, "The literature suggests, indeed, that service learning is both a philosophy and a methodology." Generally, service learning is identified as the latter with emphasis on "personal growth of the service providers, especially in areas of self-esteem and social responsibility." According to Morton and Troppe (1996), "Service learning theory begins with the assumption that experience is the foundation for learning; and various forms of community service are employed as the experiential basis for learning."

Service learning can encompass a number of activities ranging from class projects to internships. Service learning does not have to be associated with a particular professional field such as in the case of peer tutoring. Service learning can even be defined to include community-based learning, such as a field trip or internship, which is not tied directly into "service" per se (Kraft, 1996).

Kraft (1996) identified classroom-based projects as a predominant form of service learning with the following qualifications: "carefully tied to curricular objectives, contain academic content, involve the student in reflection, and contain an evaluative component." Without such, the experiences, according to Kraft, would be better classified as community-based learning or volunteerism. Bringle and Hatcher (1996) suggest an even more explicit definition in that the experience must emphasize the service component and its civic lessons. Criteria specified by Mettetal & Bryant (1996) include selecting activities that contribute to learning goals, offering a community service, and providing a basis for applied research by which students link theory to practice and by which faculty

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are afforded data for subsequent analysis and publication (thereby coordinating service, teaching and research missions).

Herein, the less stringent definition of service learning will be used with the assumption that some learning is inherent in the process of serving regardless of whether that service entails a professional orientation, and the assumption that direct reflection on civic lessons could not be graded in the context of some courses. The focus, then, is as described by Mettetal & Bryant (1996, p. 24): "Service learning projects are a means to teach new professionals and at the same time to address relevant social concerns."

One of the underlying assumptions of service learning itself is that it translates into long-lasting learning (Kohls, 1996; Morton & Troppe, 1996). While research indicates that service learning, including the projects associated with a class, can enhance learning outcomes (Boss, 1994; Cohen & Kinsey, 1994), further investigation is still needed not only in the area of its impact on students. McDaniel (1994, p. 29) recommended, "... using computer, videotape, or other techniques of 'distance learning' in some service learning courses and assessing change in knowledge, skills and values, by such means as learning logs and reflective journals."

Research in this field needs also to be concerned with other parties involved in the experiential equation -- namely academic and site supervisors, and the community or community-based organization which benefits. Mettetal & Bryant (1996) offer an overview of how service learning projects have empowered students, faculty, the community and the university in two separate projects. Student benefits identified included students obtaining undergraduate research grants, presenting conference papers, pursuing graduate degrees, and having a general feeling of "doing good"; however, the students recognized the disadvantages of the projects being time-consuming, and that they had to work with "unpleasant people." Faculty benefits included obtaining research data used for grants, conference papers and publications. The community, of course, benefitted from the services provided, as did the university in that it fulfilled part of its mission.

Similarly, assessment must consider these various interfaces which affect student outcomes and subsequently the perceived effectiveness of institutions of higher education. Haley and Jackson (1995) highlighted some of these interfaces when they delineated one program's assessment methods. They outlined four evaluation categories: program components (including class evaluations and peer reviews), graduating students, internal and external constituents, and the comprehensive program (such as accreditation).

Since service learning engages schools in multiple interfaces while allowing students to apply professional skills to community groups in need, service learning is one way a program has to link a program's assessment to the broader institutional mission -- if creative and practical means for documenting and measuring service learning exists. Evaluating service learning is in keeping with several questions posed as means for evaluating assessment efforts (Haley & Jackson, 1995, pp. 33-34): "Are the students developing the kind of leadership qualities that will help them become productive and effective professionals," and "Are our assessment methods a valid description of the real experience of the students, faculty, and important external constituencies?" Fulmer (1996, p. 5) discussing general program development and evaluation also specified that departmental planners should define the department's mission "in a manner which is both useful and politically expedient: 'How will the department serve its majors and assess such service in a meaningful fashion.'"

Creativity by program faculty in developing assessment measures is generally encouraged (Graham, Bourland & Fulmer, 1996). Some have reported on broad program evaluation and its links to assessment and to institutional planning (Cole, 1996; Fulmer, 1996; Haley & Jackson, 1995). Graham, et al. (1995), on the other hand, detailed how one public relations program used internship analysis as one means of assessment. While internships can be classified as service learning in some cases, few have reported means by which communication sequences can incorporate components in an assessment program, or how they can quantify service learning efforts. One example is Sallot's (1996) description of the bottomline impact of a particular public relations campaigns class which adopted the university as a type of service-learning client. Results included that the program itself became beneficiary with the funding of a class lab. Outside of the economic impact, Sallot (p. 59) wrote, "At the same time, structuring the campaigns class in this fashion gave the students substantial firsthand experience with fund-raising theory and practice, filling in gaps in their education that could not have been bridged otherwise."

The following case study describes the application of an agency-based model to assess the economic impact of a service learning class project, the results including follow-up interviews with the students involved, and the limitations and opportunities of this form of analysis.

Method

Students enrolled in a practical, one-credit hour class (quarter system), were asked to participate in this study based on work they planned and implemented for a blood drive for the local Red Cross chapter. Student participation entailed logging hours analogous to public relations agency work conducted for clients. The students understood that participation was voluntary, and that the actual work completed for the client, and not the hours logged, would serve as the basis for their grades.

The National and Community Service Act of 1990 defines service learning with a set of four criteria, all of which were met in this case. First, the students in the practica course worked on a project that met actual community needs and was coordinated in collaboration with the university and the community. Secondly, the project was integrated into the curriculum and allowed the students to write about and discuss what they had participated in and observed during the service activity. Thirdly, the project allowed students to use newly acquired public relations skills in a real-life situation. And finally, the knowledge the students gained from the service learning project enhanced what they were learning in the classroom and extended their skills into the community, aiding them in developing a sense of caring for others (Cohen & Kinsey, 1994).

The five students in this practicum were responsible only for designing and implementing the publicity and promotional components of the spring campus blood drive. Any logistical planning such as coordinating room set-up, generating volunteers, and scheduling nurses for the blood drive was completed by the client.

The students possessed various levels of public relations knowledge. Three of them were seniors and two were juniors. Four were public relations students; one was an English student minoring in public relations. Based on each student's strengths and classes completed, the instructor let the student group determine who would be responsible for completing what tasks instead of delegating individual assignments.

While students were given the directions of logging time and the corresponding activity for that time, they recorded only the actual time involved, probably because outside of class meetings, most time was devoted to group-assigned tasks and event participation. As a result, students were asked to recreate those activities since it would be important to evaluate their time estimates from a public relations professional standpoint in terms of whether reasonable time amounts were reported for particular tasks such as writing a news release or memoranda. In other words, it was important to determine if time spent on a task was comparable to time for which an agency could realistically bill a client.

In-depth interviews were conducted to evaluate the time reconstructions which the students said were easily done by checking their calendars and class meeting notes. The in-depth interviews furthermore allowed follow-up work on the students' attitudes and evaluations of service learning. They also provided the opportunity to check for differences in evaluations based on subsequent experience in the field as two of the five students were completing required internships.

From the time reports, student time was converted into agency billable hours multiplied by a reasonable agency per hour fee. Using Kelly's "Figure Your Fees" (1987), Writer's Market (1996), as well as one of the co-author's public relations agency experience, approximations of the actual cost for the publicity service were determined. This is the fee the nonprofit group would have to have paid for professional services.

Results

The time reports were tallied according to student tasks. In so doing, typical tasks emerged to create five key categories of work: writing assignments, follow-through, meeting time, miscellaneous project work (non-writing) and on-site work. An estimated total of 16 hours was spent on writing projects, to include a publicity proposal, press releases, public service announcements, direct mail letters to student organizations, memoranda to faculty and staff, feature stories, weekly progress reports for the instructor, and a follow-up media analysis report for the client.

An estimated total of 12 hours was spent on follow-through and follow-up projects. These tasks included making telephone calls to the media and other campus and community contacts, verifying addresses and contacts, addressing and stuffing envelopes, purchasing supplies, and announcing the blood drive date at various student meetings.

Under the task grouping of miscellaneous project work, two duties were logged: posting flyers and a banner, along with removal of signage after the event. Students spent approximately 16.5 hours completing these tasks.

Meetings constituted another category. The class met each week for one hour for 8 weeks throughout the 10-week term. The students did not meet during the ninth week because they worked the blood drive that week. During the tenth week they did not meet as a group but were responsible for turning in individual follow-up reports. One student was responsible for writing the final media analysis follow-up report for the client. Each student missed one class meeting. The amount of required class time totaled 35 hours. However, each student reported that he or she spent an average of 2 additional hours outside of the class meeting with practica members for various reasons. This increased the meeting total to 45 hours. Typically, an agency bills the client for meeting time, whether it be a planning or creative brainstorming session or even to meet with the client to go over details of the project.

On-site work represented the fifth category. Each student was required to work the sign-in table for at least 2 hours the day of the blood drive, depending on his or her class schedule. The students worked a total of 15 hours that day.

Based on the time reported by each of the students, a total of approximately 105 hours was spent to develop, design and implement the publicity, promotional and media relations opportunities for the blood drive. If an agency representative would have taken on this project, the hourly fee would most likely be at least $50 per hour. The average fee range in the southeastern, non-metro area is $50-100 an hour, depending on the skill level necessary for the projects and tasks at hand. For example, agency executives would not charge as much for writing a standard press release as they would for writing a report that entailed much research, interviewing and follow-up. Regarding the students, a base hourly fee of $10 an hour was used to calculate their billable hours. Since a base fee normally includes a mark-up of 2.5-3 times, $10 was judged to be a reasonable billing rate for student practitioners operating without overhead. Thus the final student agency fee would have been $1,050.

It should be noted that a practitioner would not need to spend quite as many hours on the project as the students did. Since the practitioner is more skilled and experienced in completing writing projects, he or she would be able to get projects done more quickly. However, the practitioner's base fee would be at least five times that used for students. Moreover, the student time allotments were reviewed to ensure that inordinate amounts of time, high or low, were not being "billed."

After reviewing the tasks the students completed, one of the authors who has carried out an array of agency projects, mapped out how many hours she believed it would have taken her to complete promotional tasks for a blood drive. She estimated that she would have spent about 30 hours on the various assignments and another 6 hours working the check-in table the day of the blood drive. Additionally, she would have had to hire at least one other person to work a 6-hour shift during the event, bringing her total billable hours to 42. The students spent a total of 70 hours (not including the required 35 hours of planning time they spent during class).

In the estimations, she indicated that she would only charge $10 an hour for on-site participation while other work would be billed at $50 an hour. As such, professional practitioner costs would have been $1,620 ($1,500 for 30 hours, and $120 for 12 hours on-site work). The $570 difference between the student rate of $1,050 and the practitioner rate of $1,620 would have been quickly compensated for had the professor's time in counseling, client contact and editing been included in the student time estimates for billable hours.

The end result of this analysis is that the nonprofit organization benefitted from approximately $1,000 work of volunteer professional service, a realistic figure when compared to estimates for an agency practitioner to have performed the same work. While more students in the class may have offset these results somewhat, less time would have been spent by others in individual tasks. Moreover, comparing and/or contrasting the student versus professional rates allows for a validity check on whether rates would be perceived as realistic.

In addition to determining the billable hours, or in effect, creating an economic impact statement based on the savings which in effect were accrued by the community-based organization, the researchers conducted in-depth interviews with the students the following term. The interviews included questions asking students to evaluate their time participating in the project and the personal results or benefits of participation. Students were also asked to define service learning and how it compared and contrasted with other pedagogical methods. Generally, students indicated the writing activities took more time. Class meetings

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took the least amount of time, and were perceived as less productive, which is certainly in keeping with many practitioners' reactions to meetings. While the students perceived class meetings as wasteful, they still recognized that the meetings were necessary for planning and coordination purposes.

Student benefits consistently pointed to the professional portfolio material obtained. Yet benefits were also mentioned when the students were asked to define service learning. Generally, the students pointed to the satisfaction of helping people. One commented on the satisfaction of seeing the finished product -- the people attending the blood drive partly because of the student's involvement in the publicity. Another student defined service learning as "... something that stays with you forever -- it is not so easy to forget something you actually worked on." This statement supports service learning -- in terms of both philosophy and pedagogy -- as long-lasting learning. Other benefits related to the nonprofit organization in that students felt they had learned much about this organization, about the need to document everything, about nonprofit groups in general, and specifically, about how this group "helps people directly."

Interestingly, when defining service learning and when comparing it to other forms of pedagogy, several students commented about learning from mistakes. "We saw what would and wouldn't work," or "In service learning, it's ok to have right or wrong because it's ongoing." In effect, students seemed freer in a project -- or possibly in a supervised group project -- to take risks, to learn from their mistakes in the service learning context. Apparently, they understood that they could try other means if one did not work, which is something that they said could not be attempted with tests and research papers. This ability to change tactics, to try different techniques is perhaps further underscored in one student's comment: "Lectures convey information from professor to student through conversation. More importantly, service learning conveys information from professor to student through action."

Conclusions and Implications

Detailing approximately $1,000 professional billing equivalent in service work, for one specific project emphasizes the benefits provided by the students for a non-profit group. These benefits are multiplied if one considers the numbers of classes which incorporate a service learning component within one academic year. Student feedback indicates their own recognition that service learning, as a form of pedagogy, provides lasting learning. In terms of personal growth mentioned earlier, students' recognition of learning from their mistakes reflects on self-esteem. Social responsibility issues emerge in their comments related to helping people. Another student indicated that he planned to continue to do service work "on the side" as a professional.

While this agency model method for ascertaining an economic impact of service learning projects provides quantifiable data to be used by administration, it also has inherent limitations, some of which can easily be framed as opportunities. The first limitation is that the equation only superficially highlights the professor's role. While the literature promotes and this study supports service learning as a critical tool for teaching and learning, future research must consider the cost-benefit ratio of faculty time versus student learning. According to Morton and Troppe (1996), "Service learning is a relationship- and time-intensive pedagogy for both students and faculty."

Another limitation of relying only on economic impact statements is that they do not directly reflect the quality of the experience for the students or the group which benefits. This limitation can easily be turned into an opportunity by incorporating "authentic assessment" (Fall, 1996; McDaniel, 1994) in that a holistic approach can be developed. In this case, a mini-portfolio of student material could be created to include published materials as well as time lines, etc. The class portfolio may not be required for every service learning project in a particular program to be assessed, but instead be assigned at random to classes with known projects for the upcoming year. Or the project portfolio can be a final requirement of the class, so that its collation does not have to always fall on faculty. Furthermore, contacts at the benefitting organization could be asked to rate student participation and work quality, and to provide reactions to the service cost estimations. In many cases, site contacts are more than willing to write letters which also become part of student or project portfolios. These additional methods create greater opportunity for feedback so that the program can evaluate service learning components and opportunities.

In addition to using these methods, it is also recommended that the results be made public beyond just the reports. The community should know of such contributions as should students, faculty and other key institutional audiences. Outside of the school, presenting the results in scholarship can help the academic community know more about service learning and assessment (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).

While the service-learning project involved herein focuses on publicity efforts of a public relations class, the agency analogy or economic impact premise is readily adaptable by other programs in speech and mass communication. Writer's Market includes freelance estimates for business and technical writing, feature stories, educational and literary services, as well as audiovisuals and electronic communications. Many types of agencies provide services ranging from speech training to videotaping. These agencies can be contacted in developing an initial fee base for estimations of economic impact of various service learning projects incorporated in speech and mass communication classes.

This agency-based formula, then, can provide a basis for annual assessment and/or evaluations for professor's personal or class experiences with service work. With time analysis of several projects, reasonable time estimations could be made annually so that the economic benefits of service work or service learning can be approximated and summarized in individual and program reports. The financial base provides a quantitative measure of the service component, and can be furthermore supported qualitatively with feedback from the students or from the group or organization benefitting from the work.

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Women in Public Relations

How Their Career Path Decisions Are Shaping the Future of the Profession

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Women in Public Relations:
How their career path decisions are shaping the future of the profession

Abstract

This study focuses on the lives and career path decisions of twenty-five female practitioners currently working in the public relations profession. It looks at the choices they have made, the paths they have chosen and the societal and organizational restraints that influenced their decisions. As the industry becomes more feminized, the study examines the impact of the different career patterns for women and also asks whether the public relations profession is facing a potential loss or underutilization of talent.

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INTRODUCTION

The public relations profession has experienced a major shift in the gender composition of its members in a twenty-five year period. In 1970 males accounted for 73.4% (Donato, 1990) of the profession or almost three-quarters of its workers. By 1995 women accounted for over 58% of practitioners working in the industry (Public Relations Society of America, October 1995) and the percentage continues to increase. Women have moved well beyond making inroads and now comprise the majority of the profession. Since over 80% of college students currently studying public relations are women (Becker, 1990), the trend is not likely to reverse itself anytime soon.

Various scholars and researchers have studied this gender shift within the public relations profession from a number of different points of view. Some have focused on the issues related to salary and prestige as a profession becomes more feminized (Toth & L. Grunig, 1993; Cline & Toth, 1993; L.A. Grunig, 1988,1991,1995; Toth, 1988, 1989a, Toth & Cline, 1991). Other studies have looked at the division of work or roles theory within the profession (Kucera, 1994; Dozier & Broom, 1993; Creedon, 1991; Broom & Dozier, 1986). This paper is based on findings from a recently completed study (Huberlie, 1996) which took an in-depth look at the lives of 25 female, public relations practitioners currently working in the field. The research explored the educational background and the initial attraction of the respondents to the public relations profession, as well as their early career decisions. It also examined the participants' levels of satisfaction, their perceptions of available opportunities and of how the profession fit with other aspects of their lives.

The purpose of this paper is to look at those findings which emerged from the research that address a potential loss and underutilization of talent within the public relations industry due to a variety of life situations. By listening closely to the experiences of the women in the study, we can begin to reflect on this depletion not in the light of one individual's circumstance, but rather to consider a collective glance at what the impact might be on the future prestige and stability of the public relations profession. By looking at the career options and trajectories of the women in the study, particularly their often-disjointed work paths, we can better understand the present configuration of the profession and what changes might lie ahead.

Although the circumstances of the study's participants varied considerably, the focus of this paper will be on the research questions and responses related to three particular career scenarios for the women in the study. The first group are those women who initially followed a full-time career track but were detoured by traditional reasons such as motherhood and relocation for their spouse's work. The next segment are women who have decided for a variety of reasons, ranging from frustration to a strong sense of entrepreneurial spirit, to start their own businesses within the profession. The final group is comprised of women who have achieved what most would consider a high level of success within the profession. These women have had an upclose look at what they termed the "concrete", "lead", or "glass" ceiling, and many of them have decided that even if they found the "jackhammer" to break through, the reward on the other side was no longer as appealing. Some of these women are "redefining" success in ways that diverge from the traditional career path.

All of these women, and others like them, are shaping the public relations profession of today and tomorrow. Their choices, or in some instances lack of choices, and their actions significantly impact the profession. A closer examination of what they have to say can benefit all practitioners, both male and female. If talented practitioners are abandoning agencies and corporations, are being limited by the profession or leaving it entirely, the consequences are significant for all in the industry. This research can also be helpful to other scholars studying the profession by providing a chance to hear the everyday experiences of these practitioners. It can certainly guide students, particularly females, toward a more complete picture than that which can be found in a classroom. Finally this research could serve as a springboard for a much broader quantitative study, one that would explore the career paths and decisions of a large number of participants to see how the obstacles, detours and new directions chosen by a sizable group of practitioners is shaping the future of the profession.

Theory and Literature Review

This study focuses on the lives and career paths of women in the public relations profession. However, in order to understand the career and life decisions made by the participants, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the context in which these choices were made. An extremely large amount of literature exists in such disciplines as sociology and psychology to explain career-life plans, career-stage models for women and female-adult development patterns. The issues of gender stereotypes and women's additional family responsibilities also come into play. This review will summarize some basic considerations related to these topics and their application to the findings for the women in this study.

Career Stage Models

A brief look at the literature dealing with career stage models for women reveals that it is only in recent years that researchers have focused on theories that apply exclusively to women's development. Gallos (1989) noted, it was not uncommon for early career theorists to view women's anomalies over the life course as "developmental deficiencies" when they failed to conform to an established male pattern. Although the career-life plans of any two women are different, there is one issue, in particular, that seems to set women apart from men and that is the continued emphasis women place on relationships as well as career development (Bardwick, 1980). This difference manifests itself in a variety of situations, some of which are influenced by biology, others by factors such as societal norms and expectations.

Parenthood and the Career Path

The first area of variation between the sexes involves the issue of parenthood. Although men also become parents, the decision, as part of a career-life plan, is much different for them. According to Bardwick (1980), this is a dimension that clearly separates women's and men's lives. Not only do men not have the same biological urgency, the structure of society is such that men do not have to postpone fatherhood for their careers. Many men consider parenthood a given --90% of corporate male executives have children before age 40 while only 35% of female executives do (Karsten, 1994, p. 20). Women also have to deal with the fact that the whole career cycle in the United States is predicated on the life cycle of a man. People usually have to prove themselves between ages 30 and 38, but that is also when executive women tend to have babies (Fierman, 1990, p. 58).

A woman's decision to have a child usually has a greater impact on her career trajectory than the same choice does for a man. Roberts and Newton (1987) proposed the concept of the "split dream" which suggested that women developed dreams that included both career and family domains, whereas men focused on a single dream of career success. Schwartz (1989) raised quite a stir when she proposed that organizations divide their female employees into two groups with assignments based on the choice of an emphasis on career versus family relationships. The career primary woman would focus only on her career and the career and family woman would seek a balance between career and relationships with others. The first type of arrangement is the long-standing fast-track and Schwartz recommended that organizations remove all constraints on women choosing this path so they could be as successful as their male counterparts. The second category was dubbed the mommy-track by the media and involved a trade-off of career opportunities for a more flexible schedule and family supports. In her later work, Schwartz (1992) denied that she was trying to "track" only women and said instead she was arguing for a family-friendly environment for all employees. She stated, "We will all fail if babies and families aren't placed on the business agenda."

Societal Restrictions

Five years later in the corridors of business, government and just about everywhere else, there is plenty of talk about "family values" but very little real accommodation or change. According to a recent article in Fortune (Morris, March, 1997), "The dirty little secret is this: For all its politically correct talk, your company doesn't much like your kids." It goes on to say that while families used to be a corporate prerequisite (when only men were executives) they are now viewed as an "albatross", especially if they cut into your billable hours. While some men are affected by the additional responsibilities that come with a family, the brunt of the burden is still falling mostly on women. According to a University of Missouri-Columbia study (Shinkle, 1994), in addition to hours spent at paid work, women put in approximately 40-44 hours per week on work related to family and home responsibilities; men average about 13 hours per week. Women are also responsible for 80% of the long-term care provided for elderly parents (BNA, March 1992).

Relationships and Work

The emphasis women accord to relationships also is directly related to the actual work environment. According to Powell and Mainiero (1992) women tend to focus more on how they feel about their careers, including how they interact with co-workers and superiors, than on how the career actually looks from a more objective viewpoint. In a study by Hollenbeck, Ilgen, Ostroff & Vancouver (1987), women were found to prefer lower-paying jobs to higher-paying jobs when the former offered non-monetary outcomes that the women valued such as the flexibility to go in and out of the work force or a feeling of control over one's work schedule. The price for such flexibility, however, may be a long-term or even permanent assignment in the "ghetto" of one's profession.

The term ghettoization is not a new one in the public relations literature. Over twenty years ago, Gourney (1975, p. 12) explored the status of women in the public relations profession and found the tendency for female practitioners to be clustered in women's interests areas such as retailing and cosmetics. Although female practitioners are now in many different areas, there is still a tendency for segregation in terms of role enactment and salary. The Velvet ghetto study (Cline, et al., 1986) reported that largely due to a subtle socialization process, women were more likely to perceive themselves as technicians rather than managers. Later research by Toth and L.Grunig (1993) found that female practitioners had moved into the management role but often still performed technician duties and were paid 47% less than their male counterparts. In their 1993 study, Dozier and Broom said they dedected progress in the relationships between gender and salary and gender and role enactment; however they noted, that there was not yet a state of "gender parity". The two scholars also said the real question should be about career choice and not the inherent worth of the work itself. They questioned whether women selected the technician role or whether the influences of socialization, stereotyping, opportunities and discrimination resulted in involuntary segregation. Creedon (1991, p. 69) argued that the technician role is perceived as "women's work" and consequently devalued by a society that places a lower value on work performed primarily by females.

The obstacles faced by women in the public relations profession are also part of numerous other professions. Women in banking, real estate, law, psychiatry, medicine and many other fields face similar challenges (Jacobs, 1995; Statham, Miller & Mauksch, 1988; American Bar Association, 1995). The notion that restrictions on women are not limited to the public relations profession, but rather are a part of the societal fabric was reinforced by Hon (1995). She argued that, "Discrimination against women in public relations cannot be separated from the organizational and societal systems that produce gender biases"(p. 65).

Entrepreneurial Route

The literature indicates that one way female public relations practitioners are dealing with the salary limitations and opportunity obstacles within the profession is by becoming their own boss, usually working from their own home, but sometimes from another location (Humphrey, 1990). Humphrey reported that of the 1.9 million Americans who work exlcusively at home, about two-thirds are women and the numbers have continued to grow since her study. Humphrey (1990) conducted case studies of twelve women running public relations businesses from their homes and had hypothesized that she would find sexual discrimination as a leading reason for women leaving companies. Instead, she found that increased flexibility, work autonomy and better child care were equally important in motivating the women to start a home-based business. She noted that increased economic prospects was also part of the rationale. Humphrey concluded that organizations risk a talent drain if they do not respond to the issues of gender inequality and the need for flexibility.

Redefining Success

Another relatively recent phenomenon, taking place in many professions, is the departure of talented, successful career women in their forties and fifties who leave for non-traditional reasons. These very accomplished, highly educated women are exiting from the fast track not to have a family nor to move with a spouse, but for their own fulfillment (Morris, 1995). They have viewed what is on the other side of the infamous "glass ceiling" and have decided that the gold ring didn't turn out to be gold but just plain old brass (Quindlen, June 1996).

What is missing from the literature? As I stated earlier, I believe that many gender-related issues have been examined by other scholars. What needs to be done is to see women in the complex context of their lives, and then to recognize how their career and family decisions are ultimately affecting the configuration of the profession. Women clearly comprise the majority of public relations practitioners and any loss of talent or underutiliztation due to societal and organizational constraints will influence the profession.

Based on the research presented in the literature and the exploratory, qualitative nature of this study, these research questions were posed:

RQI: Is the public relations profession perceived as one that offers above average opportunities for women in terms of salaries, autonomy and job opportunities?

RQ2: Do women in public relations sense there is involuntary segregation due to socialization, stereotyping or discrimination within the profession?

RQ3 Do women in public relations who choose to have children find their career options are limited?

RQ4: Are senior female practitioners experiencing greater opportunities and are they planning to stay on a traditional path within the profession?

METHODOLOGY

This study is an exploratory one and I chose a qualitative approach using in-depth interviews to answer the research questions. In attempting to understand what social, psychological and organizational variables influenced the career patterns for the participants, this method seemed the most appropriate choice. This study is written from a feminist perspective in that it doesn't try to generalize from men to create an explanation for both men and women, but rather incorporates the values and qualities that characterize women's experiences (Foss and Foss, 1989). It strives to be "actor centered", respecting the stories as reported, and using the experiences as data (Dervin, 1987).

Research Techniques and Limitations

In choosing to use in-depth interviewing as the method for gathering data, the methodology allowed for a large collection of data in a relatively short period of time. This type of study promotes a deeper understanding between researcher and respondent which is favored in feminist research. I believe, given the nature of this research, an egalitarian relationship with the respondents was essential to the success of the interviews. The instrument used for the interviews were ten open-ended questions as opposed to a structured questionnaire. Although using in-depth interviewing to illuminate human experiences has its advantages, it is not without its limitations. The most obvious one is that deceptions, exaggerations, fabrications and distortions can take place in an interview just as they might in a conversation between any individuals (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p.81).

Sample Selection

The potential pool of respondents for this study were female practitioners with a minimum of seven years professional experience directly in the field. All areas of public relations were considered: corporate, non-profit, agency and entrepreneurs. Initial participants were selected based on the directories for two professional organizations: Women in Communications, Inc. (WICI) and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Four cities in New York State were targeted for the study: Buffalo, New York City, Rochester and Syracuse. An introductory letter explaining the purpose of the study was sent to all potential participants; this was followed by a telephone call to determine interest in taking part. A number of the interviewees also were identified through referrals from others, (snowball sampling) particularly the women in New York City.

Demographic Information

The 25 women selected for the study had worked in the public relations profession for periods of time ranging from 8 to 30 years. Eighteen of the women had at least 15 years of experience. Twenty-four of the women were currently working either full-time or part-time in the profession; one had recently switched to writing feature articles for a daily newspaper. Fifteen of the respondents were from the Rochester area, four were from Syracuse, three were from Buffalo and three worked in New York City. All of the interviewees had at least a bachelor's degree and quite a number had some type of graduate degree. The age range for the participants was quite broad. The youngest person was 29 years old, five women were in their thirties, twelve were in their forties, five were in their fifties and the final two were senior citizens - - one in her late sixties and the oldest respondent was a 74 year -old who worked full-time.

All of the women in the study appeared to be Caucasian -American. Seventeen of the participants were married and eight were not. In the single group, two were widowed, three were divorced and three had never married. Ten of the participants had no children of their own, although one woman in that cluster had grown stepchildren. Five other women in the study had children who were no longer at home. Of the remaining ten women, five had only one child and each of the other women had two children.

The salary range for the participants was also fairly broad as is indicated in the chart below:

SALARY RANGE FOR PARTICIPANTS

Class	Interval	Frequency
1	less than $20,000	4
2	$25,000-$35,000	5
3	$35,000-$45,000	6
4	$50,000-$75,000	7
5	over $75,000	3

Data Collection

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with twenty-two of the participants; three had to be done by telephone. All interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. The length of the interviews ranged from just under 60 minutes to more than 90 minutes. Thirteen of the women chose to be interviewed in their offices. The remaining sessions occurred in homes, in restaurants and one took place in a hotel room. Brief notes were also taken during the interviews to draw attention to themes or interesting quotes.

Data Analysis

In this study data analysis began early on in order to be aware of and to capture emerging themes. The purpose of data analysis is to decide the categories, relationships and assumptions that make up the respondent's worldview in general and the topic in particular (McCracken, 1988). Shortly after each interview I did a preliminary analysis of what had taken place and I wrote down themes and comments. After transcribing each interview, observations and comparisons were made and the text was grouped for patterns and issues. The uniqueness of the stories and the voices of the women were a critical part of this research and were retained as much as possible by the use of direct quotations in reporting the results. I looked for inter-relationships in the responses and placed themes in a hierarchical order, especially in terms of answering the research questions. I wanted to capture the essence of the interviews, but move also from the specifics of the individuals to a higher level of generality that could add to the body of knowledge in the public relations profession.

FINDINGS

The findings reported here represent the experiences and convictions of the study's participants. According to Hon, (1995) this information is valuable in its own right and does not have to be supported by previous research. The responses are grouped according to the research questions.

Research Question 1: Is the public relations profession perceived as one that offers above average opportunities for women in terms of salaries, autonomy and job opportunities?

To answer this question I asked the women in the study to talk about the job opportunities they had encountered as well as their overall professional experiences in terms of salaries and promotions.

Opportunities

The majority of women felt the public relations profession offered women a wide range of opportunities, probably more than in many other professions. Almost all of the participants, however, could cite an incident in which a particular opportunity was different for her than for a male colleague, either in terms of autonomy or salary. The title of a position was often the same, but some aspect of the job had changed. Another problem reported by some of the women was the on-going association of female executives with support staff. One woman reported that even after she had completed her M.B.A. and had become the spokeswoman for a large utility, she still encountered men in the company who considered her to be a high-ranking secretary. Another woman said her opportunities may have been limited by her unwillingness to be politically motivated. She said, "I try to make decisions that I view as moral and ethical, so I think my personality has prevented me from getting ahead." Most in the study stated that opportunities for promotions were good for women, especially if you were smart or extremely driven. On the other hand, the majority thought that many of the male practitioners they had encountered only had to be your "average Joe" to get promoted or succeed. The majority of participants felt they had clearly earned their opportunities. One woman summed up her feelings, "Certainly as a senior officer making a lot of money with plenty of nice perks, it is difficult to say I didn't get a fair shake. However, I have also been working for 28 years, so it wasn't exactly handed to me."

Salaries

The subject of salary can be a touchy one for many people - - both men and women. Some individuals are less intimidated by a question about sex, than one about how much money they are making. While some women in the study expressed satisfaction with the amount they were earning, the majority said they deserved more. The few women who were content, tended to compare their compensation only with other women within their organization. One participant felt that salaries in the non-profit public relations sector were particularly inadequate and questioned whether this would be still be true if more men worked in this segment. Another woman who worked at a relatively small non-profit and was earning $45,000 said the problem stemmed from the tendency by women to sell themselves short. She reported that when she was hired for her present position the board told her they could get someone for under $30,000. She told them to go ahead, but to be prepared for a "big learning curve." If, however, they paid her what she was worth they would get a maximum return on their investment. A number of women in the study were not such good negotiators and felt that the lack of such a skill resulted in lower pay and other forms of compensation. Others in the study blamed the pay differential on the continuation of a societal myth or expectation of the male as the primary earner. One participant related a story about a single mother asking for a raise at a public relations agency that was in line with what a male colleague had just received. She was told that he needed more money to support his wife and child. Finally one woman said, the salary question is no mystery and can be clearly explained. "Men are paid more. I know they are paid more and it is why more women are leaving to become entrepreneurs."

Research Question 2: Do women in public relations sense there is involuntary segregation due socialization, stereotyping and discrimination within the profession?

In attempting to answer these questions, I asked the participants to evaluate their qualifications and speak about the opportunities they had experienced in their careers. I asked them to discuss whether they felt the career path in public relations was wide open for female practitioners or whether women were segmented into particular areas.

Corporate Positions

The majority of the respondents interviewed felt that women had access to public relations positions in a variety of areas, at least based on their own experiences in the industry. The respondents did, however, point to problems faced by practitioners in trying to gain access to or in working in the corporate setting. A number of women noted that while many positions appeared to be important and high profile, this "public image" was often not matched with any real power or high salary. These women expressed frustration with "always being on the outside" or the "tail end of the decision-making process." Quite a few of the women, however, did raise the question of whether this outsider status was due to their gender or the placement of the public relations function within an organization.

There were others in the study that felt downsizing or restructuring had eliminated many high ranking public relations positions in corporations and organizations. A number of the participants pointed out that while female practitioners were disappointed by these cutbacks, male practitioners were even more discouraged since men, more often than women, just assumed they would be able to land such a position. In at least one situation, the "old boys network" did come through for one of the guys. A women who had served for more than a dozen years as the primary communications person for a large food distributor suddenly found she was no longer directly reporting to the CEO. The company had been expanding and the Board of Directors had decided to create a new position of vice-president for communications. The post was filled by a man with qualifications very similar to the long-time female employee, but he also happened to be an old college buddy of the CEO.

A number of women mentioned the term segregation to describe how non-profit and corporate practitioners are classified. They talked about trying to make a switch from the non-profit setting only to find that their skills were not viewed as serious public relations experience in the corporate or organizational setting. One woman felt fortunate that she had been able to "escape" non-profit work by her second career move because she felt she might have been "stuck" there forever. She considered such work to be a ghetto for low paying jobs. There were quite a few women in the study, however, who considered non-profit work to be more satisfying than a corporate position in ways that were not directly tied to financial rewards.

Role Segregation

Many of the women in the study were in management positions but did perform technician-type work such as writing or editing as part of their job. None of the women tried to downplay such endeavors and often referred to it as "creative work." Even the senior practitioners in the study noted that while they valued the importance of strategic involvement, they didn't feel one must be totally removed from the nitty-gritty in order to be an effective manager. The women talked about motivating people and producing an effective team, but also spoke about "rolling up their sleeves" to pitch in where needed. A number of the participants felt that male practitioners sometimes showed a real deficiency in certain areas because they "didn't spend enough time in the trenches." Some of the women stated that men drew a clearer line between administrative and support, but at the same time pointed out that the downsizing taking place in many corporations means that all practitioners must be prepared to wear more than one hat. As one woman noted, "You are so grateful at times to have a job that you don't realize you are doing two or sometimes three different jobs."

Flexibility/Limited Mobility

A number of women, especially those with young children, talked about the flexibility within the public relations profession to do freelance work. One participant stated that good practitioners are not tied to a company or product because their skills can be applied in a lot of different ways. She said, "I think that public relations gives you the option of taking your skills on the road." Another participant said that once she had acquired all of the necessary toys, namely a modem, fax machine, computer and laser printer, it was easy to get a free-lance business going. Although these women were glad to be able to keep one foot in the business, most were clearly conscious of the price they were paying for the flexibility.

"I know my career is drastically losing momentum," said one woman who had a young child. Another participant spoke recently at the college she had attended and found herself on a panel with a younger woman who had once served as her intern. "Here I am worrying about nickels and dimes to keep my free-lance assignments under budget and she is flying off to England and Amsterdam to do promotions for a large pharmaceutical company." This participant and others in the group said it was much harder to find the path back to the career track than it was to get on the freelance route. A number of the women talked about isolation and openly worried about being pigeon-holed permanently.

Research Question 3: Do women in public relations who choose to have children find their career options are limited?

In order to answer this question I asked the women in the study to talk about their decision to have children or in some instances not to have a child and what the effect had been on their career. I also asked them whether or not they were comfortable with the sacrifices they had made.

Childless Professionals

These particular questions elicited lengthy responses from many of the participants and there seemed to be a great deal of common ground. One area of agreement between both mothers and non-mothers was that the demands associated with a high-level public relations position leave very little room for children or any other outside responsibilities. One person who is married, but childless, talked about twelve-hour days and routine nightly interruptions. She stated, "This whole situation would be dysfunctional with children." Another participant who had recently left a high-profile position at a major medical center said, "The person who took over my position has young children and he sees them very little, but of course, he has a wife. I suppose if I had a wife -- wouldn't we all like one? -- then it would be a whole lot easier." Another woman who had grown step-children summed up her schedule this way, "Your time is never your own. Nights and weekends are a given and there is no set schedule." None of these women expressed any major regrets about having remained childless and most viewed it as a type of choice, albeit not always a conscious one at the time. As one woman stated, "It took me a while to realize this, but I chose a career as opposed to a family."

Motherhood and the "Fast Track"

There were participants in very senior positions who did choose to have a child and maintain their careers full-time. A common thread for this group was a very supportive spouse. One senior partner at a large advertising agency said, "I am fortunate in that I have a husband who does about 80% of the work that needs to be done for childcare and housework." Another woman who travels a great deal said her husband was the constant for childcare since he was able to pick up their son at 5 p.m. and she was likely to be in a different city. Yet another described her husband as a true partner. "He knows what needs to be done with the kids and he doesn't expect me to take care of him either."

"Mommy-Tracked"

There was also a group of participants with children who chose to take some side-steps or detours along the career path. Again, there were some similarities in the stories told by the various participants. A number of these women said their husband were okay for an occasional assist, but not for the day-to-day routine. One woman who is married to a surgeon stated, "I'll go out for a meeting and come back to find the kids watching a video at 10 p.m. and dinner was microwave popcorn." Another said her husband was all right on the bath and bed routine, but cleaning bathrooms, doing laundry and grocery shopping were foreign activities to him.

Two other participants offered a different viewpoint about a woman's struggle to balance work and family. Both remarked about the large amount of guilt women feel versus how men feel in similar situations. One woman explained how her children's birthdays always fell during exam week while she was getting her M.B.A. Her husband viewed it as no big deal, and thought they could be celebrated at a different time. She felt awful but admitted, "I know his is a healthier attitude it is just hard for women to think this way." The other participant said, "Men are just more free. If they need to be doing crisis communication all night long, that is all right with them."

Organizational Restrictions

Another shared experience for those who had stepped away from the full-time career path were the limited choices they perceived in trying to combine work and family. One woman described her attempt to work full-time after her first daughter was born. "When I was at work I felt guilty about not being with her, and when I was home I felt guilty about not doing the extra work I had brought from the office. It was a lose-lose situation and I was not allowed to go part-time since I was the director of a department." Another said that had her previous employer offered on-site day care, she would still be working there. One respondent pointed out that in this age of computers, faxes and modems, most of her work could have been done at home, but her employer was more concerned with the "hours logged than the results produced." A mother with two young daughters said that although she was content with her career decision to take time away, she resented the perception that she had opted for the easy way out. She told about a male newspaper columnist who had written, "Maybe women are these soft, fuzzy creatures who just want to stay at home." Her response was, "The reason I am staying home is that it is just not financially profitable for me to work and my husband not to."

Societal Expectations

A number of women in the study talked about personal convictions, strongly supported and shared by their husbands, that at least one parent should be the primary caretaker for a child. All of the women said it could be either parent, but in every case, except one, it was the mother who interrupted her career. The exception was a woman married to a man in his early fifties and they had a four-year old child. His position was eliminated at the company where he had worked for twenty years so the decision to be the primary caretaker was not a voluntary one. His wife said, "He was the gold-watch kind of guy who was going to die working for the company. Now that I am the primary bread winner, he has a whole different perspective." One woman who still worked full-time said she only puts in long hours when there is a major crisis. "My family is too important to me, so I get done what I can and maybe when the girls are older I can focus more on work."

Research Question 4: Are female practitioners, particularly senior level women, experiencing greater opportunities and are they planning to stay on a traditional career path within the profession?

To answer this research question I asked the women if their careers were at a point they had expected to be at this stage in life, and whether they had encountered the so-called "glass ceiling." I also asked them to talk about where they expected their career trajectory to go in the next five years.

New Directions

I asked these questions of all in the group, but I was particularly interested in the responses of the women in more senior or influential positions. These women are often the "cream" of the industry and can provide leadership for the future. One participant had been a senior vice-president at a very large international agency and had decided to leave to teach and do freelance work. She stated, "Five years ago I would have viewed my decision as a cop-out. I expected to go to the very top, but now that is not what I want." Another woman who had left a high-paying management position to promote the cause for battered women said for the first time in a long time she felt that she was doing something worthwhile. She laughed about how many people thought she was nuts to quit her job, especially for what she is now doing. One participant who had also recently made a mid-career shift said, "To me it is a question of life and living it. Not being so outwardly directed but more inwardly directed and quieter." This woman is presently running a flourishing public relations business from her home, but hopes to eventually cut back and spend time teaching inner-city children to read.

Glass Ceiling

In listening to some of the women talk about leaving fast-paced, high-level positions, it seemed logical to ask what role, if any, a "glass ceiling" had played in their decision. Although most of the women in the study said the infamous ceiling was still intact, and actually was probably made of concrete or lead, a number of participants indicated they were no longer so bitter about its existence. One woman said she used to be very angry about the barriers, but now she doesn't waste her energy worrying about it. "You have to choose where you are going to fight your battles. I no longer even want what is on the other side." A number of the women talked about knowing many senior practitioners who had simply become tired of seventy-hour weeks, constant travel and not enough positive feedback.

New Opportunities

Most in the study saw this burnout of good people only from a negative viewpoint, but at least one woman had a positive twist. She noted that the shortage of senior talent, especially at large public relations agencies, meant greater opportunities for a person with an entrepreneurial spirit. She explained, "One of the most exciting things about public relations today is that there is tremendous opportunity and basically you can go in and define your opportunities. I sometimes feel like a kid in the candy store with so many areas I want to work in." Another woman tied the increasing number of entrepreneurial opportunities in public relations with the downsizing taking place at corporations and also came up with a positive perspective. She pointed out, "In a big company everything is political and percentages. When you run your own show and get the job done, most people don't care what sex you are." A number of the senior level women who had decided to start their own business said they had could have as many clients as they could handle, and if they chose to could make more money than they ever had working for someone else.

DISCUSSION

The current study focused on the lives and career paths of twenty-five female practitioners currently working in the public relations profession. It attempted to look at the choices they have made, the societal and organizational restraints they have encountered and whether the public relations industry is faced with a potential loss or underutilization of talent, particularly as women continue to make up a larger portion of the industry.

Although the group of women in the study represented only a small fraction of all practitioners in the industry, I believe the results provide relevant insights and show patterns of interrelationships that can be helpful to practitioners and scholars alike. As an exploratory project, I started with two broad hypotheses. One was that the career path of a woman is determined not only by one's personal preferences, but also to a large degree by societal and organizational influences. Secondly, I surmised that a woman's career trajectory is often more disjointed than a man's and as a profession becomes more "feminized," as is happening in public relations, the impact of such different career patterns will influence many aspects of the profession. A number of themes and issues emerged in the interviews to support these statements.

Organizational Restrictions

The findings indicate that female public relations professionals face a number of different challenges, some of which are gender specific, some that relate to all practitioners and some that are embedded in society. On the whole, overt discrimination in the public relations profession does not appear to be a major issue, although most of the women indicated that a state of gender parity also does not exist. Many of the women interviewed felt that their male colleagues continued to receive better compensation which would support Broom and Dozier's (1993) study that progress had been made but that the disparity problem had not yet been eradicated. Overall the majority of the women in the study did not seem to fit the pattern of the "contented female worker," a term used by Phelan (1994) to describe a woman who is equally satisfied with a job despite less pay and authority than a man. Most of the women interviewed felt they deserved to make more money and desired increased authority, especially if that meant enhanced autonomy in their work lives.

The women in the study who held high level public relations positions particularly seemed to feel the need for greater control in combining work and other obligations. Some of these executives had decided not to have children and those that did found that an extremely supportive spouse was an absolute necessity. These women made what Lopata (1993) referred to as a "side bet" such as the avoidance of the role of mother or the selection of a particular type of spouse. These participants noted that high level public relations positions offered very little in the way of a balanced life. In describing her choice of compromise one woman said, "I know I can't do it all so I am giving up being healthy."

A number of those in the study, however, were finding different ways to bring a sense of balance into their lives. Some of the participants with young children were still working full-time but had cut back on the number of extra hours they worked. Others had decided to freelance or work part-time while their children were young. Most felt that they had little choice in deciding to detour off the full-time career path since most of the organizations they worked for did not offer on-site day care, job-sharing, flexible schedules or the opportunity to work from home. Overall the women seem to indicate that the idea of a work culture that is "family-friendly" exists only in political speeches, not in reality.

Another group of respondents have decided that even though their family obligations are now minimal, they still want more from life than 70-hour work weeks. Many of these women held very high-level positions within the industry and have decided to quit and redesign their lives. Some have abandoned the profession altogether and others are taking the parts of the public relations work that they enjoyed best and are combining it with a new endeavor. This departure of top-level, talented women inside agencies and corporations has created opportunities for other female practitioners who have decided that the best way around salary discrimination is to forget breaking the "glass ceiling" and instead become an entrepreneur.

Challenges within the Profession

As indicated earlier, the findings in the study also pointed to problems that potentially affect all public relations practitioners. Respondents talked about jobs with the "illusion of power" but with no real access to the decision makers. Most of the women attributed this dilemma to the fact that the public relations function is not a critical unit in most organizations. This would agree with Hon's (1994) and L. Grunig's (1995) assertions that "marginalization of the function, rather than overt sexism, keeps women out of positions in which they can contribute most to their organizations and to the public." The findings in this study seem to indicate that the marginalization problem will become an even bigger issue as more and more companies "outsource" work to independent entrepreneurs. Such a practice can only contribute to moving the public relations function even further away from the center of power within an organization.

Limitations/Future Research

As indicated earlier, this study was exploratory in nature and the results are not generalizable. It should be noted, however, that the goal was the depth provided by the interviews and not the breadth of a large quantitative study. Nevertheless, the next logical step would be a large-scale survey that would include minority practitioners and, perhaps, male practitioners for a complete representation of the profession. Neither group was part of this study.

Conclusion

In addition to examining the career paths of women in public relations by putting their stories and experiences into context, this study also addressed the issue of the potential underutilization and loss of talent within the public relations profession. I believe it is likely that the departure of talented senior practitioners will influence the future direction of the profession. Public relations, more than many other professions, needs strong leaders in its ongoing struggle to maintain credibility. The profession also needs to find ways to allow for women to leave the fast-track for a period of time without being permanently derailed. Many of the freelancers in this study were qualified for much more complex positions, and the underutilization of their talents is frustrating to them and foolish for the industry. Finally, the findings indicate that agencies and corporations will continue to lose talented women unless they resolve salary and family issues. On the other side of the coin, female practitioners who choose the entrepreneurial route should recognize that the initial benefits of operating outside the organizational structure may start to diminish as public relations potentially becomes a more external and dispensable function in many organizations.

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Better Than Drinking Poison: Editors' Perceptions of the Utility of Public Relations Information Subsidies in a Constrained Economic Climate

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Running Head: Information Subsidies

Better Than Drinking Poison: Editors' Perceptions of the Utility of Public Relations Information Subsidies in a Constrained Economic Climate

Abstract

Public relations practitioners provide information subsidies to the media on behalf of their clients to influence the media agenda and potentially affect public opinion. McManus (1994) states news media are using more subsidies to contain costs and increase profits. This study of editors' perceptions of the phenomenon suggests increasing economic constraints have led to an increased use of these materials only in specific instances that often do not support the agenda building goals of the sponsoring organizations.

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Introduction

Public relations practitioners provide information subsidies to the media on behalf of their clients in order to influence the media agenda and thus potentially affect public awareness and opinion. Research has identified a number of factors that inhibit media acceptance of public relations materials, such as lack of source credibility; economic constraints, however, have been identified as a factor that may contribute to greater use. Media critics charge that since the mid-1980s the media industry has suffered increasing economic hardships, causing media personnel to subsume traditional journalistic values to economic necessity, resulting in an increased use of public relations materials (McManus, 1994; Underwood, 1993). This study employs in-depth interviews and a nation-wide survey of newspaper personnel to determine their perceptions of the role of economic forces on the use of public relations information subsidies and whether they perceive that role and journalist-practitioner relations changing in response to recent economic trends.

In 1982 Gandy coined the term *information subsidy* to describe controlled access to information at little cost or effort to the person receiving the information. Public relations professionals provide information subsidies to the media to distribute systematically information on behalf of their clients. If practitioners can obtain media placement of their subsidies then they influence the media agenda, which in turn can influence public opinion and the public agenda--a process that has come to be known as *agenda building* (Turk, 1985). The success of these efforts is documented in part by studies that estimate that 40 to 50% or more of daily newspaper content originates from press releases (Sachsman, 1976; Wilcox, Ault, & Agee, 1995). Thus public relations practitioners may become trusted

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'journalists in residence' for their organizations, channeling information subsidies through the media and directly subsidizing journalists' news gathering activity (L. Grunig, 1987; Hunt & Grunig, 1994).

In Turk's study of the role of public relations information subsidies in agenda building, however, she found that media gatekeepers are active and prefer journalistic autonomy (Turk, 1985). Other studies conclude that as much as 90% of all news releases are never used (Elfenbein, 1986; Martin & Singletary, 1981). Much of the literature contends that media personnel's reluctance to use public relations information subsidies stems from adversarial relations between journalists and practitioners: "To listen to journalists and public relations practitioners talk about each other is to get the impression that the field of media relations is a battleground" (Hunt & Grunig, 1994, p. 43).

A series of coorientation studies, beginning with Feldman (1961a, 1961b) and Aronoff (1975), found that journalists hold generally negative attitudes toward public relations, with journalists denigrating practitioners' news values and job status. Replications of Aronoff's study have confirmed these findings, although the intensity of antagonism seems to have lessened somewhat over time (Habermann, Kopenhaver, & Martinson, 1988; Kopenhaver, 1985; Kopenhaver, Martinson, & Ryan, 1984; Pincus, Rimmer, Rayfield, & Cropp, 1993). These studies conclude, however, that journalists believe practitioners lack source credibility because their motivations are inherently self-serving, which in turn devalues the newsworthiness of practitioners' information subsidies (see also Turk, 1985, 1986a, 1986b). Few variables can increase practitioners' source credibility for journalists, including personal knowledge of the source (Aronoff, 1976;

Habermann et al., 1988), acceptance of the story by wire services (Martin & Singletary, 1981; Walters & Walters, 1992), and source prestige (Stocking, 1985). Because public relations information subsidies are provided at little to no cost to the media, however, some studies suggest that economic constraints can contribute to their acceptance. For example, the smaller the news staff and the larger the newshole, the more public relations material used (Morton, 1986, 1988; Morton & Warren, 1992).

Many newspaper industry critics suggest economic pressures on the industry have become more pronounced since the mid-1980s following the increasing concentration of ownership into publicly owned corporations (Bagdikian, 1992; Busterna, 1988b, 1989; Demers & Wackman, 1988; Pickard, 1993), the sharp drop in advertising revenue during the mid-1980s (Gomery, 1989; Underwood, 1990), and the overall decline of profit margins (Tharp & Stanley, 1992). The pressures, they claim, have caused owners and publishers to allow business concerns to drive editorial content by sacrificing journalistic values to keep profit levels high (e.g., Alter, 1985; Burris & Puhala, 1987; Kovach, 1994; Mintz, 1993; Secunda, 1993). McManus (1994, 1995) and Underwood (1993) label the resulting news content *market-driven journalism* and claim it abandons traditional journalistic values in part by using more commercially subsidized materials, such as public relations information subsidies. They view these changes as almost inevitable given the microeconomic market forces operating on U.S. media industries, particularly those industries publicly owned and responsible to shareholders.

Given a trend toward market-driven journalism, the acrimonious dynamic underlying journalist-practitioner relations may be changing as sources of cheap information become more valued by journalists charged with improving their paper's bottom line. As newsroom staffs are cut, it is conceivable that journalists will become more dependent on the low-cost information subsidies public relations practitioners provide. Because newspapers provide an economic, credible communication channel to many public relations audiences, increasing their ease of use could enhance the chances of success for many public relations campaigns that use mass-mediated communication channels. Additionally, should journalists start to view practitioners as cohorts in news production rather than as obstructionists, the chances greatly increase that public relations practitioners can help set the media agenda, thus ultimately shaping the public agenda. An overwhelming trend toward market-driven journalism, however, could result in a loss of media credibility, making newspapers ineffective communication channels.

To better understand this dynamic, this study explored three broad research questions.

1. How do journalists perceive the role of economic constraints on the formation of news content? Do they perceive economic constraints as being more pronounced in recent years?

2. How do journalists perceive the role of information subsidies supplied by public relations practitioners in the construction of news? Do they have perceived economic value? Does economic value increase their usefulness in the news production process?

3. How do journalists perceive the relative status and power of public relations practitioners compared to their own profession? Is this status changing because of changing economic pressures? How does perceived status affect use of public relations information subsidies?

Newspapers were the medium studied for two reasons. First, McManus (1994) developed the concept of market-driven journalism from participant observation work in the broadcast field, although he claims it is applicable to all types of commercial news production. This study, then, attempts to fill a gap in the literature. Second, this study examines how market-driven journalism may affect journalist-practitioner relations, and for practitioners the print news release remains the most common tool of conveying information to the media (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1994).

Methodology

In-depth interviews and a national survey of personnel at weekly and daily, independent and chain owned, privately and publicly owned newspapers were used to determine journalists' perspectives of the role of public relations information subsidies in the construction of news. The in-depth interviews employed snowball sampling to obtain subjects from the pool of editors and reporters based on their information richness (McCracken, 1988; Patton, 1990). As the interviews proceeded, ongoing data analysis revealed that managing editors contributed the most in-depth data; later subjects and the survey sample were recruited from the pool of managing editors only. The 21 subjects interviewed and their affiliations are given in Table 1. To protect confidentiality, all names presented in this research are pseudonyms. Average duration of the interviews, which were recorded and transcribed, was about 1.5 hours.

The survey employed five-point Likert-scaled statements derived from the literature and from the interview data to measure respondents' attitudes (Table 2). Also included were seven demographic and five ownership variable questions concerning the company for which the respondent worked. A final open-ended question invited respondent input. The questionnaire was pretested by 18 subjects with editorial experience. The sampling frame was provided by the *1995 Working Press of the Nation*, Vol. 1. After removing free-circulation papers (i.e., shoppers and traders) from the sampling frame, 1,569 dailies and 3,908 weeklies remained. Because ownership and organizational size variables emerged as key constructs from the interview data, the sampling frame was stratified into eight cells as shown in Table 3. A chain was defined as two or more daily and/or weekly papers in different cities under the same principal ownership or control. Random sample pulls were made from within each of these cells. The targeted number of responses was 15 within each cell, creating comparative cells of 60 each. To obtain the necessary 120 responses, 700 surveys were initially mailed; cells that had a low response rate on the first mailing had a deeper sample pull made, and a second set of 422 surveys was mailed. A follow-up mailing was made to all nonrespondents.

Of the 1,122 editors surveyed, 27 could not be reached at their directory addresses and these surveys were returned as undeliverable. Of the remaining 1,095, 189 surveys were returned for a response rate of 17.3%. While the response rate is low, it is in line with other mail surveys of managing editors (i.e., Demers & Wackman, 1988, 13.3%; Beam, 1993, 19.3%), and the cell response rates obtained were sufficient to provide comparison groups of at least 60 responses (Table 4). Additionally, 28 of the 122 chain-owned papers, or approximately 23%, were owned by companies with publicly traded stock. This percentage reflects the proportion in the population and allows comparisons between privately and publicly held newspapers as well (Morton, 1996; Working Press of the Nation, 1995).

The frequency distributions for the demographic questions are shown in Table 5. The average respondent was a 35-to-40-year-old male, with 11 to 20 years experience, making $30,000 to $49,999 per year, and having a 4-year college degree. Managing editors at weekly papers were significantly more likely to be female (t = 3.38, d.f. = 180, p<.001), to have fewer years of experience (t = 3.57, d.f. = 178, p = .000), and to make less money (t = 5.24, d.f. = 149, p = .000) than their counterparts at daily papers. Managing editors at chain-owned papers were significantly more likely to be younger than their counterparts at independent papers (t = 2.14, d.f. = 116, p<.04). Respondents at large-circulation papers were significantly more likely than those at small-circulation papers to earn a higher salary (t = 2.39, d.f. = 173, p<.02, respectively). A careful double check of responses to the ownership variable questions to ensure that all respondents were classified into the correct cells revealed that just over 10% of all respondents were mistaken or unaware of the ownership status of the paper for which they worked.

Results

For economy of presentation, results from the interviews and the surveys are combined. In response to the first research question concerning the role of economic constraints in the construction of news, all interview subjects volunteered that since the mid-1980s declining advertising revenues had caused cutbacks in the size of news staffs.

> The declines in ad revenues in the late 1980s caused papers to downsize big time. And the newsroom is always the one that gets cut. It's hurt our content because we're left with fewer people to cover as large an area. It's made newspapers reexamine their market to determine what they are going to cover. (Jack, managing editor at a large, chain-owned daily)

Only 21.5% of survey respondents believed they had an adequate staff size to cover the news. Another 10.8% were neutral, and two-thirds (67.8%) said their staff size was inadequate (M = 3.81, SD = 1.19; 5 = strongly disagree). Those who felt significantly more constrained by lack of staff were those at publicly held rather than privately owned (t = 3.09, d.f. = 46, $p<.01$) papers and those at chain-owned rather than independent (t = 2.68, d.f. = 130, $p<.01$) papers (Figure 1).

Just over half (51.9%) the survey respondents disagreed with the statement that their paper stressed profits over quality of coverage. One-fourth (25.1%) were neutral, and approximately one-fourth (23%) agreed, 13.4% of them strongly (M = 3.40, SD = 1.32; 5 = strongly disagree). The only significant difference found was that respondents at independent papers (M = 4.02) were significantly more likely than those at chain-owned papers (M = 3.07) to disagree (t = 5.30, d.f. = 159, p = .000). When asked how often they believed the news content of their paper was compromised because of economic pressures, over half the respondents said never to seldom (54.1%), 25.9% said half the time, and 20% said frequently to always (M = 2.59, S.D. = 1.04; 5 = always). These results correlated with the measures of adequate staff size and stress on profits over quality given above (R = .34, $p<.001$; R = -.42, $p<.001$, respectively). Respondents at chain-owned papers (M = 2.71) were significantly more likely to believe that economic pressures compromised news content at their papers than those at independent papers were (M = 2.36; t = 2.24, d.f. = 134, $p<.03$).

Although many interview subjects referred to *market-driven journalism* when talking about these economic pressures, no two subjects shared the same definition of the term.

Definitions ranged from content that was totally reader driven, to elite audiences delivered to advertisers, to thinking about the economic repercussions of every story under production. About the only definition that all seemed to agree on was that it "creates a very uncomfortable knot in my stomach."

The second research question concerned how journalists perceive the role of information subsidies supplied by public relations practitioners in the construction of news, whether these subsidies have perceived economic value, and whether economic value increases their usefulness in the news production process. Few interview subjects reported using press releases. For one editor, they were useful to fill holes. Although the paper was a small weekly, these holes were blamed not on a lack of staff but on a lack of news.

> That's when public relations firms and PIOs and their press releases come in very handy--when you hit those slow news times. Canned stuff is good to have when you need it to fill up those holes. (Mandy; managing editor at a small, chain-owned weekly)

It was difficult, however, for interview subjects to speak about public relations materials separately from the people who produce them. Thus, reported use of materials was often based on the perceived motivations of the groups or organizations that produce them. The few subjects who admitted using public relations material usually had strict criteria for what material they would use based on promoting social causes over economic gain; that is, materials would be used if they stemmed from organizations perceived as having public service motivation.

> We only run stuff from charitable organizations, health organizations. (Betsy; managing editor at a small, chain-owned, publicly held daily)

> We'd only take cooperative extension materials. (Tom S; managing editor at a small, independent weekly)

The major reason given for rejecting public relations information, particularly from commercial sources, was a lack of news value. Far from providing an economic subsidy to the paper, subjects perceived these public relations materials as an economic drain on the paper because they were an attempt to gain free advertising.

> A lot of money is wasted in what are called news releases but are not news releases but merely someone's attempt to get free advertising. (Helen; managing editor at a large, independent weekly)

Although subjects reported low use rates, the interview data suggest that actual use rates may be higher, depending on how a "use" is defined. Many of the subjects who reported not using public relations materials actually used them to spark story ideas. The following subjects said they categorically did not use public relations material in their papers, yet elsewhere in the interviews they also stated:

> Press releases are definitely a big help, especially for the lifestyles section. The lifestyles editor just quit recently, so in that section press releases have become a really important source for story ideas. (Mark; managing editor at a small, independent weekly)

> I think we're typical of most newspapers in that we use pr mailings strictly for ideas. (Kevin; news editor at a large, chain-owned daily)

This confounded sense of "use" is obvious in the following quote from an editor who strongly denied ever using public relations material.

> We don't run pr releases--period. We may run something from the cooperative extension service--a little filler. . . . We may get ideas for something. And we have at the extension office somebody who runs a column. But it's mostly ideas. We don't run pr releases. (Betsy; managing editor at a small, chain-owned, publicly held daily)

Because the literature suggests that self-reported use rates are artificially low, the survey drew on the interview data and asked the respondents how often they used public relations materials as the basis for a news story *even just to spark an idea.* One respondent marked never; another marked always. Just over half (51.9%) the respondents sat on the fence and said about half the time; 20.5% said seldom, and 26.5% said frequently (M = 3.06, SD = .716; 5 = always). These use rates are higher than those reported elsewhere in the literature (Elfenbein, 1986; Martin & Singletary, 1981). There were no significant differences noted on this self-reported use rate.

A second confounded sense of "use" of public relations materials that emerged from the interview data was that of content for special sections. Subjects believed the advertising recession of the mid-1980s had led the industry to turn to advertiser-friendly content as a way to attract more advertiser dollars, resulting in a proliferation of special sections. All interview subjects mentioned special sections as a proactive move their organizations had taken to retain and increase advertising revenue.

> A lot of local newspapers and definitely chains are taking a very proactive stance to create news that bolsters advertisers. The way in which it is generally handled is through special sections. They are easy to get advertisers into because the content is always driven by the ads. Special editions are made to look like they are there to serve readers' interests, but they're actually there just to generate ads. A lot of copy used in this paper is advertiser-generated copy. (Dick: managing editor at small, chain-owned weekly)

A total of 21.1% of survey respondents said they always produce special sections, 39.5% said they frequently produce them, and 29.2% said they produce them about half the time (M = 3.70, SD = .940; 5 = always). Only 10.3% of respondents said they seldom or never produced them. Respondents at chain-owned versus independent (t = 4.49, d.f. = 115, p = .000) and at daily versus weekly (t = 2.10, d.f. = 179, p<.04) papers were significantly more likely to say they produce these sections more frequently (Figure 2).

For all subjects, finding the human resources to write the copy was problematic. With staff cuts at most papers, news staff have been hard pressed just to cover the regular news, never mind the expanded newshole caused by special sections.

> We do a lot of special editions, and it's really sort of banging the news department. But again, I see it as a financial endeavor, and in one respect, if you're given enough time to do it you can do something worthwhile. And they are good for targeting a specific type of advertiser. But some newspapers do two and three a month, and then there's nothing special about it. Whatever we can do additionally, that's wonderful. But I don't want to see the news suffer. (Betsy; managing editor at a small, chain-owned, publicly held daily)

Over half the survey respondents (52.9%) agreed that special sections interfere with putting out regular news sections, 19.3% were neutral, and 27.8% disagreed (M = 2.68, SD = 1.31; 5 = strongly disagree). The only significant difference was noted at chain-owned (M = 2.52) versus independent (M = 2.98) papers; respondents at chain-owned papers were significantly more likely to believe they interfere (t = 2.31, d.f. = 129, p<.02). Two survey respondents volunteered that they no longer do special sections at their paper because they interfere with getting out the regular news sections. Another noted that the reporters do not give the same level of effort to special sections as they do to the regular news sections: "My reporters don't do their best work for these sections. Some give it a mediocre effort; others could care less."

Another problem encountered with editorial staff producing special section copy was that by definition, the copy is advertiser friendly. Advertisers will not pay for ads in special sections that contain adverse material. This need to provide advertiser friendly copy can change the advertisers' perception of their relationship with the news staff.

> When I do a special section on a group, I'm in a position where it's a good news only sort of thing. And some of my sources in organizations look at me almost like an ally, like I'm affiliated with the organization. These people no longer look at you like a reporter. They present me with certificates for being what they call a responsible journalist. I know better. They wouldn't call me a responsible journalist if I printed something they didn't like about them (Lynn: features editor at a large, chain-owned daily)

In some cases, the problems inherent in producing the extra copy for special sections were solved by turning over the copy writing to the advertising staff. Some subjects had no problem with this as long as the writing was up to par because they viewed the sections as advertising vehicles only. Many of the subjects, however, viewed the copy produced by the advertising department for special sections as advertorial, which they did not feel comfortable putting in the newspaper. If the material was presented as editorial copy, these subjects did not care that the section was being used as an advertising vehicle, they cared that material was being presented as editorial copy when it was not.

> Although it's not labeled, a lot of the copy in special sections is advertorial because we have ad reps actually write some of the copy. I don't like it, but I do it anyway. Ad reps generate the copy; I just put it on the page. But I try to keep my hands away from it as much as possible. (Jack: managing editor at a large, chain-owned daily)

While many editors were not comfortable with copy being written for special sections by the advertising staff, however, they were willing to use public relations information subsidies for this purpose. But because these are special sections, not regular editorial copy, subjects did not perceive this use of public relations material as an actual "use" because the resultant copy was not perceived as news. One editor spoke out strongly against the use of public relations materials in editorial copy, saying papers should reduce profit margins rather than use public relations information subsidies.

> You're on hour 70. your reporters do no overtime, and there's a hole on page 3. And you have a fairly well-written pr piece of community interest. That's where a paper has got to put up with a smaller profit margin. The writing's going to be better, everything is going to be done from a more neutral standpoint if you've got a reporter doing it. Papers have got to understand that they are going to live with a smaller profit margin but do a better job.

Yet just 5 minutes later in the interview, he said:

> If pr copy dried up then special sections would disappear because a lot of time copy on those is provided through press releases written by major companies, who know that all newspapers are putting out a spring lawn and garden section. And you know you can't do that stuff yourself. We used those press releases almost verbatim, right into the paper. So they have a huge effect on specials. (Dick; managing editor at a small, chain-owned weekly)

This dichotomous attitude toward advertising originated copy versus public relations originated copy is illustrated by the interview subject who compared allowing commercial interests to drive editorial coverage to "drinking poison," whereas using public relations information subsidies to originate advertiser friendly copy for special sections to attract more advertising dollars was a "worthwhile financial endeavor." Many interview subjects agreed that public relations information subsidies were invaluable for filling special sections, and the proliferation of special sections made good business sense.

> Journalists are becoming smarter. They see so many papers around them collapsing, going under. They need to figure out ways of achieving this balance, where they can maintain editorial integrity and yet be accommodating to business pressures and to advertisers. They're looking for solutions. I think they're wising up because they're running scared. (Bob; copy editor at a large, independent daily)

To follow up on this line of inquiry, the survey asked respondents if public relations material fills holes in the paper caused by lack of staff. A total of 13.4% of respondents strongly agreed with this statement; 39.6% of respondents agreed overall. A total of 40.1%

disagreed, 17.1% of them strongly, and 20.3% were neutral (M = 3.04, SD = 1.31; 5 = strongly disagree). This measure, however, did not correlate with a lack of staff size nor with the use of public relations material. It did correlate with the statement that producing special sections interferes with producing regular sections (R = .34, p<.001). Thus this measure appears to be more closely related to using public relations materials to fill special section copy holes rather than to subsidize what editors viewed as news, rather than advertising, sections of the paper. Respondents at chain-owned papers as opposed to independents were significantly more likely to believe public relations materials fill holes (t = 2.08, d.f. = 119, p<.04), as were respondents at weekly rather than daily papers (t = 3.93, d.f. = 152, p = .000; Figure 3).

The third research question asked how journalists perceived the relative status and power of public relations practitioners compared to their own profession, whether this status was changing, and how perceived status affected use of public relations information subsidies. Interview subjects believed journalists and public relations practitioners must master similar skills, but, as noted above, they perceived the motivations of the two groups as being diametrically opposed.

> I went into newspapers for the same old reason as almost everybody does. I wanted to try and make a difference. However small, make things a little better, change the world. Isn't that what everybody wants? Otherwise you go into pr. (Betsy; managing editor at a small, chain-owned, publicly held daily)

Bob, who was the most open to use of public relations materials, perceived the fewest differences between the two professions.

> The two jobs are very similar. The difference is that in some cases in public relations truth is a little bit more selective in that there are some unpleasant truths that the pr practitioner doesn't emphasize or doesn't want publicized at all. On the other hand, I think you can go through and analyze a whole lot

> of news stories and it would show the same sort of mechanical bias coming from the part of the editorial employees making the news decisions who are selectively telling truths. But it just seems to be more apparent on the part of the pr practitioner. (Bob; copy editor at a large, independent daily)

For most subjects, however, the motivations were quite different, resulting in different information being communicated.

> I think the jobs of journalists and public relations practitioners are similar in the sense that they are both disseminators of information. But I think at the same time that similarity is very narrow because the PIO is going to be more interested in disseminating the information that's going to be of benefit to his client of his employer whereas the journalist is going to be interested in not only that piece of information but anything else that may be pertinent to the issue at hand. (Mandy; managing editor at a small, chain-owned weekly)

It is this perceived difference in motivations that drives selective use of public relations materials from non-profits only. Otherwise, the originating organization's motivation is perceived as profit-driven, which journalists do not perceive as consonant with their mission of public service.

> I've never had much association with somebody who did pr. I mean the worst thing you can say to a reporter is, "Your story is like a pr piece." Yet there's a lot of good pr I think, especially those who do serious work for a political party or for a worthwhile organization. But somebody who just promotes a company or product--uh, uh. It's not my kind of person. (Tom S; managing editor at a small, independent weekly)

In turn, many subjects perceived journalistic work as being more difficult and more satisfying, despite the differential in salary.

> I'm one of those old-time purists. PR is selling out. I know they make a lot more money, but I just could not say good things all the time. It's like a happy-type newspaper. It's not a true reflection of society. (Betsy; managing editor at a small, chain-owned, publicly held daily)

The subjects who denigrated practitioners and their work the most believed practitioners would benefit from journalism experience. Although practitioners already had the job skills, only by working as a journalist could practitioners gain knowledge of journalistic standards and apply them to their work.

> If the pr person has a journalism background, if they have worked as a reporter, then number one, I know it without even asking, just by the way they deal with me and the way they handle things. If they have a journalism background, I'm more prone to deal with them. (Deena; reporter for a large, chain-owned daily)

Practitioners with journalism experience were viewed as being more ethical in their relations with journalists; otherwise, subjects perceived them as purely manipulative.

> PR people who don't have a strong journalism background will try to sugarcoat you, will try to play around with you. As a journalist, you know what is going on and you resent that. When you're dealing with a person with a journalism background then they're more apt to be straight up. (Deena: reporter for a large, chain-owned daily)

Materials provided by practitioners perceived as having a journalism background were more likely to be used; subjects believed they would contain inherent news value because of the experience of the source.

> I can tell that the pr people at the extension service have news experience because I can do very little to their stories. They are written very news style, and I can send them straight on back. (Lynn: features editor at a large, chain-owned daily)

What is key here is a "perceived" journalism background. In this particular instance, a call to the extension service confirmed that of the three people writing news releases there, only one had a journalism background--3 weeks at a small daily.

A total of 85% of the survey respondents agreed with the statement "I hold newspaper journalists in more esteem than I hold public relations practitioners." Only 4.8% of respondents disagreed with this statement, with the remaining 10.2% neutral (M = 1.66, SD = .921; 5 = strongly disagree). But when asked whether the *public* holds newspaper journalists in more esteem than public relations practitioners, only 36.6% agreed; 30.6% disagreed, and 32.8% were neutral (M = 2.89, SD = 1.08; 5 = strongly disagree; Figure 4). Respondents at daily papers (M = 1.46) were significantly more likely to hold themselves in more esteem compared to public relations practitioners than were respondents at weekly papers (M = 1.80; t = 2.70, d.f. = 183, p<.01). In terms of perceived public esteem for the two professions, no significant differences emerged.

Almost half the respondents (47.8%) agreed with the statement that editors do not trust public relations practitioners. Exactly one-third (33.3%) were neutral, and less than one-fourth (19.8%) disagreed (M = 2.64, S.D. = .989; 5 = strongly disagree). That mistrust was significantly more marked, however, at publicly traded rather than privately held companies (t = 1.89, d.f. = 38, p<.03), at chain-owned rather than independent papers (t =

2.90, d.f. = 152, $p<.01$), and at dailies rather than weeklies (t = 2.07, d.f. = 169, $p<.04$; Figure 5).

Those interview subjects who most mistrusted practitioners' motivations made sure to keep control of all interactions with practitioners. The easiest way to accomplish this was to take control of their materials.

> The dumb ones send mountains of materials. Sometimes very beautiful materials that I don't have time to look at. So I just say, "Oh those assholes!" and dump them in the garbage. That makes me feel good. It asserts my independence. I don't need these people; they're not going to snow me into giving them any free advertising. (Mary; city editor at a large, independent daily)

For reporters, control could also mean control over the story. They were willing to adopt ideas from public relations material, but they drew the line there.

> I don't like to be told how I'm going to run the story. You can give me the idea, but I don't want you to tell me what angle I'm going to approach it from. (Marcy; reporter at a large, chain-owned, publicly held daily)

For some reporters and lower-level editors, the desire to retain control translated into a power-driven dynamic. They not only wanted control, they wanted to be courted. They compared the relationship to the one they cultivate with sources, except in these instances they are the ones expecting to be cultivated; they do not perceive public relations practitioners as sources in the usual sense.

> I expect practitioners who want me to do them a favor by running whatever it is they're sending me to cultivate me like I cultivate my sources. I take very good care of my sources, and I expect them to take good care of me. I've had pr people call me and just demand that I run stuff. They've got to realize that they depend on me. They need to approach it with "What do you need? How may I help you?". (Lynn; features editor at a large, chain-owned daily)

A key to having journalists accept public relations material, then, was the ability of the practitioners to relinquish power to them. Journalists valued those practitioners who provided an idea but allowed the journalist to take control of it.

> This one guy always has a good idea. He always shows me how it's a good idea without him saying, "This is how I want it done." He comes up with good ideas that we can somehow take and feel like they're our own; indeed, are newsworthy somehow. (Mary; city editor at a large, independent daily)

Bob, the most open to public relations practitioners and their work, saw the need for journalists to retain control as stemming from an insecurity on their part.

> Journalists tend to feel insecure and don't want to acknowledge their dependence on public relations for information or ideas. I know which side my bread is buttered on, and I'm willing to give credit where it's due. I've seen too many cases where newspapers would be dead and under water if it weren't for the good solid information that you can get from public relations practitioners. It's just a matter of knowing how to work with individual practitioners and, in a broader sense, just the information in general. (Bob; copy editor at a large, independent daily)

The interview data suggest that this insecurity may stem from the perception that one of the few rewards of journalism is the satisfaction derived from a sense of fulfilling a mission to the public; equating it with public relations denies the validity of that mission and denigrates journalism to just another business. The data suggest, however, that editors believe the public views journalism and public relations as serving similar functions, thus denying editors the relative prestige they deserve.

Additionally, in consonance with the literature (Aronoff, 1976; Habermann et al., 1988), many subjects mentioned that personal relations with practitioners led to more favorable attitudes toward those practitioners' materials.

> A big factor in whether a news release gets run is the personal relationship that the editor or the writer has with the pr person. If they manage to cultivate a good relationship with me, and I'm friends sort of with them, then the chance of their release running is much greater. (Lynn; features editor at a large, chain-owned daily)

A survey respondent expressed the same sentiment, noting that whether he trusted a public relations practitioner was dependent upon who the practitioner was. But even those practitioners who had developed personal relations with journalists had a limited stock of credibility. Almost every subject volunteered a "bad apple" story.

> If you get to where you develop a good rapport with a pr person, you get to where you take their word as pretty much being the gospel. But let them lie to you once. I had a pr person at the hospital that was an authority, and she burned me. I gave her the benefit of the doubt the first time. After the second time I never trusted anything else she said to me. I didn't go to her any more--completely bypassed her and went to the chairman of the board. (Mandy; managing editor at a small, chain-owned weekly)

One such bad experience would not only ruin relations with that particular practitioner, it could also sour subjects' perceptions of public relations practitioners in general, a finding also confirmed by the extant literature (Ryan & Martinson, 1988).

Discussion

It must be kept in mind throughout the following discussion that the data presented here are those of subjects' perceptions and self-reports and may contain respondent bias. This study does not encompass content analyses, participant observation work, or other checks of news content or decision-making processes to determine the accuracy of these perceptions. Yet as Boulding proposed in image theory, "It is what we think the world is like, not what it is really like, that determines our behavior" (Boulding, 1959). These data, then, provide a window into the subjects' world, providing insights about the underlying basis for subjects' subsequent behavior. Because the survey response rate was low, the responses received may be from those with strong feelings about the issues tapped by the survey. Method triangulation was used to alleviate some of these shortcomings.

The majority of editors in this study did believe that economic pressures on the newspaper industry have become more pronounced since the mid-1980s and have affected how their news content is formulated. Only a relatively small percentage, however, believed that economic pressures were directly driving content. Subjects and respondents stressed instead the effects of economic constraints, such as lack of staff, rather than economic dictates, such as an emphasis on profits over content. The majority of editors, believe they are being called on to fill the same size newshole with many fewer resources, yet they believe they retain relative autonomy over the content of that newshole.

Some significant differences on the measures of economic pressures were found between chain-owned and independent papers, with editors at independent papers perceiving themselves to be more distanced from any direct economic dictates. Further research is needed to determine whether an actual difference exists or whether the perceived difference is an artifact of the usually thicker layers of management inherent in the structure of most chain-owned papers. No significant difference was found between privately held and publicly owned papers, however, in terms of the perceived force of these economic pressures. These data stand in opposition to McManus' model of news content production (1994), which states that microeconomic pressures will be greatest at those papers owned by publicly traded companies and ultimately answerable to shareholders. Additionally, whereas McManus states these forces will drive a greater use of public relations information subsidies, no significant differences were found in the use rates of these materials between publicly owned and privately owned papers. The fact that over 10% of survey respondents were unaware of the actual ownership structure of the paper for which they work indirectly supports the notion that ownership status does not directly drive economic dictates. Should public ownership be a driving force, it seems plausible that managing editors would be well aware of the ownership status of their paper. McManus' concept of market-driven journalism was not well-defined among the managing editors interviewed. Although the term was familiar to all subjects they did not share any one definition of it, suggesting editors view the term more as an industry critic bogeyman than as an experienced, empirical phenomenon.

It is evident that many editors view the public relations process in terms of Grunig's (Grunig & Hunt, 1984) publicity model, particularly corporate public relations practitioners, whose profit motive makes them suspect. Thus, public relations materials are often perceived as attempts to obtain free advertising, and not as economic subsidies. Yet a close examination of the data suggests otherwise. Editors viewed the proliferation of special sections as a new trend instigated by economic pressures, and the use of public relations materials to fill these sections was commonly seen as a necessary business move when faced by a lack of staff and a need to attract advertising dollars. The correlation of the survey measures of whether public relations materials fills holes in the paper caused by lack of staff and whether producing special sections interfered with producing regular sections supports a generalization of this interpretation of the interview data.

Although editors drew a subtle distinction between what they perceived to be the "news" sections of the papers versus "advertising" sections, such as special sections, it is interesting to note that editors were not comfortable filling advertising sections with advertising-generated copy. The underlying rationalization may lie in the fact that advertising-generated copy originates from within the paper and thus overtly breaks down the traditional wall between the business and editorial sides of the paper. Many editors viewed public relations materials more generously as potential copy for these sections because they originated outside the paper and were subject to editorial control. Corporate public relations news releases and press kits, then, may see increased usage rates as special sections proliferate if the material can be geared to the theme of the section. From these results it is evident that in terms of special sections public relations materials serve as an economic subsidy to the newspaper industry.

What remains unanswered is whether the proliferation of special sections will lead to a loss of credibility for content in these sections. Current research suggests that readers do not notice the labels used to mark special advertising sections or advertorials (Cameron & Curtin, 1995), which would suggest that readers do not make the distinction between news content and advertising content that managing editors do. Editors who were interviewed, in fact, said as much.

> Most readers don't understand the difference between news and advertising. People don't know the difference between news and opinion--even seemingly very intelligent people. (Kevin: news editor at a large, chain-owned, publicly held daily)

Should informed readers begin to mark the distinction between advertising and news sections of the papers in the same manner that editors are now doing, newspapers would become less desirable vehicles for public relations materials by negating the third-party endorsement effect they currently have (Cameron, 1994). Further research is needed to determine if the public is informed about these issues, if they matter to readers, and if public relations economic subsidies to the media may be creating credibility deficits for the sponsoring organizations.

Editors credited few practitioners with being what Grunig termed *journalists in residence* for their organizations (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Generally speaking, only if these individuals were working for non-profits or government agencies would editors perceive them as journalists in residence because the suspicion of a profit motive was removed. Subjects were clear that even well-written pieces on newsworthy subjects were suspect if the originator was not a non-profit organization "because everything is going to be done from a more neutral standpoint if you've got a reporter doing it." This finding supports that of Turk (1985, 1986a, 1986b), who in a study of public relations information subsidies found that journalists preferred information they had obtained themselves, and of Sallot (1993), who found that journalists view almost all public relations materials as slanted and therefore of no value to journalists.

Given non-profit or government agency status, however, if the materials contain news value and are written in news style, the interview data suggest they can pass almost unimpeded through media gatekeepers. While little literature exists confirming writing style as a defining acceptance characteristic (Morton, 1986, 1992-1993; Walters, Walters, & Starr, 1994), in these instances it may be crucial to achieving acceptance and obtaining better usage rates. Materials that editors perceive as stemming from the public information model of public relations, then, may serve as economic subsidies to the news industry and may perform an agenda building function. By passing basically unchanged through media gatekeepers, these materials help build the media agenda and thus potentially affect the public agenda in the manner intended by the originating organization. More study is needed to determine just how successful government public information officers and practitioners employed by non-profits are in the agenda building process given harsher economic times and to determine the role of writing style in acceptance rates for these groups.

In the few instances in which public relations material was used as filler due to lack of staff, a backlash effect was evident. Journalists felt compelled to use the material, but they expressed anger over the need to, which spilled over to practitioners. In these instances, the fact that the pieces were well written and newsworthy added to the perceived insult rather than contributing to greater acceptance of the materials. The interview data demonstrated that journalists felt a need to control news content, and they resented practitioners whom they perceived as threatening that control. Many subjects, however, praised those practitioners who provided journalists with ideas and feedback but allowed journalists to retain control. In these instances, personal relations, not materials, are key to

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acceptance by media gatekeepers, a finding in keeping with that of Aronoff (1976) and Habermann et al. (1988). These findings suggest that for corporate practitioners particularly, a move away from packaged stories and toward more interpersonal working relations may be warranted, but the perceived power differential between journalists and practitioners may make such a move difficult.

The data demonstrate that the use of public relations materials to spark story ideas forms an economic subsidy to the news media--a subsidy, in fact, valued by both interview subjects and survey respondents. What is problematic for public relations practitioners, however, is the loss of control over the content of the subsidies. Given that the goal of providing information subsidies is to shape the public agenda, this usage of the materials may be counterproductive. The following instance exemplifies this point.

> I remember when there was a big push for vaccinations. I was getting press releases from everyone--the children's hospital, the medial college, the health department--pushing vaccinations for kids. So I had my reporters give the idea a local hook. I had them call up the local health department and local doctors. In turn that led to calls to people locally who didn't believe in the benefits of immunization shots for children. So that onslaught of press releases triggered the idea to do a locally oriented story that pointed out the controversy of the issue. It was a real catalyst for me. (Mandy: managing editor at a small, chain-owned weekly)

In this instance, the media agenda was subsidized, but not in a manner that the originating organizations valued. Increased use of public relations information subsidies in these instances, then, may result in building public agendas that run counter to the goals and objectives of the sponsoring organizations.

What has come to be termed market-driven journalism, then, does not appear to be driving a greater use of public relations information subsidies, at least from the viewpoint of managing editors. Editors believe increasing economic constraints, resulting in large part from the advertising recession of the mid-1980s, have resulted in greater felt economic constraints at newspapers in terms of how they formulate content. These pressures, however, are not viewed as having the power of economic dictates, and editors believe they retain autonomy over the content of the paper. In turn, editors value public relations information subsidies for filling copy holes in proliferating special sections and for sparking story ideas--uses they do not perceive as economic subsidies, although, in fact, they are. In the case of special sections. however, reader credibility of the vehicle may be at stake, reducing the third-party effect of the media channel. In the case of sparking story ideas, the public relations goal of agenda building may be sacrificed along with the loss of control over the material. Greater perceived economic constraints appear to have contributed to the success of agenda building efforts only for some government and non-profit groups, particularly those who adapt to media style and routines. Content analysis and participant observation studies are needed to determine whether these efforts are indeed more successful in times of greater felt economic constraints.

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Table 1 Interview Subjects

	Name*	Position	Publication Type
1	Deena	Reporter	large daily, private chain
2	Mary	City Editor	large daily, independent
3	Bob	Copy Editor	large daily, independent
4	Mandy	Managing Editor	small weekly, private chain
5	Dick	Managing Editor	small weekly, private chain
6	Betsy	Managing Editor	small daily, public chain
7	Lynn	Features Editor	large daily, private chain
8	Helen	Managing Editor	large weekly, independent
9	Don	Reporter	large daily, independent
10	Marcy	Reporter	large daily, public chain
11	Anne	Reporter	large daily, public chain
12	Frank	Reporter	small daily, public chain
13	Kevin	News Editor	large daily, public chain
14	John	Sports Editor	large daily, public chain
15	Mark	Managing Editor	small weekly, independent
16	Trish	Copy Editor	small weekly, independent
17	Jack	Managing Editor	large daily, private chain
18	Larry	Managing Editor	large daily, public chain
19	Tina	Managing Editor	small daily, independent
20	Tom S	Managing Editor	small weekly, independent
21	Tom J	Managing Editor	small weekly, independent

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* all names used are pseudonyms.

Note: circulation size and chain size are based on the medians of the sampling frame used for the survey sample.

Circulation size was classified as follows:

	Daily	Weekly
small	<13456.5	<4760
large	>13456.5	>4760

Table 2 Origins of the Attitudinal Questions Used in the Survey

Subject	Source
Paper stresses profits over content	Underwood (1993), Underwood & Stamm (1992)
Producing special sections interferes with regular sections	Case (1994)
Subject holds journalists in more esteem than practitioners	Pincus et al. (1993)
Public holds journalists in more esteem than practitioners	interview data
Public relations materials fills holes caused by lack of staff	Pincus et al. (1993)
Editors do not trust practitioners	Pincus et al. (1993)
Staff size at paper is adequate	Underwood (1993), Underwood & Stamm (1992)
How often paper produces special sections	Case (1994)
How often pr materials used, even just to spark story idea	Elfenbein (1986); interview data
How often news content of paper compromised by economic pressures	Underwood (1993), Underwood & Stamm (1992)

Table 3 Sampling Cells and Target Response Rates

Publication Type and Size	Ownership Independent	Chain-Owned	Totals
Small weekly	15	15	30
Large weekly	15	15	30
Small daily	15	15	30
Large daily	15	15	30
Totals	60	60	120

Table 4 Survey Respondents

Publication Size and Type	Ownership Independent	Chain-Owned	Totals
Small weekly	21	29	40
Large weekly	18	44	62
Small daily	13	17	30
Large daily	13	32	45
Totals	65	122	187*

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* Two surveys were so damaged in the mail their results could not be used: they are not included in the counts given here.

Table 5 Frequency Distributions for Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Percentage*
Gender	Female	28.9
	Male	71.1
total		100.0
Age	< 24 years	1.1
	25-34 years	25.7
	35-44 years	31.0
	45-54 years	26.2
	55-64 years	12.8
	> 65 years	3.2
total		100.0
Experience	< 1 year	1.1
	1-5 years	11.2
	6-10 years	17.6
	11-20 years	37.4
	21-40 years	30.5
	> 40 years	2.1
total		99.9
Salary	< $20,000	14.6
	20,000-29,999	26.5
	30,000-49,999	35.7
	50,000-69,999	14.1
	70,000-89,999	4.9
	> 90,000	4.3
total		100.1
Education	< 12th grade	.5
	high school	7.0
	2-yr college	7.5
	4-yr college	67.7
	grad. degree	17.2
total		99.9
Journalism Degree	yes	49.5
	no	50.5
total		100.0
Professional Association Memberships	0	19.3
	1	31.6
	2	33.2
	3+	15.9
total		100.0

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* not all columns add to 100.0 because of rounding error.

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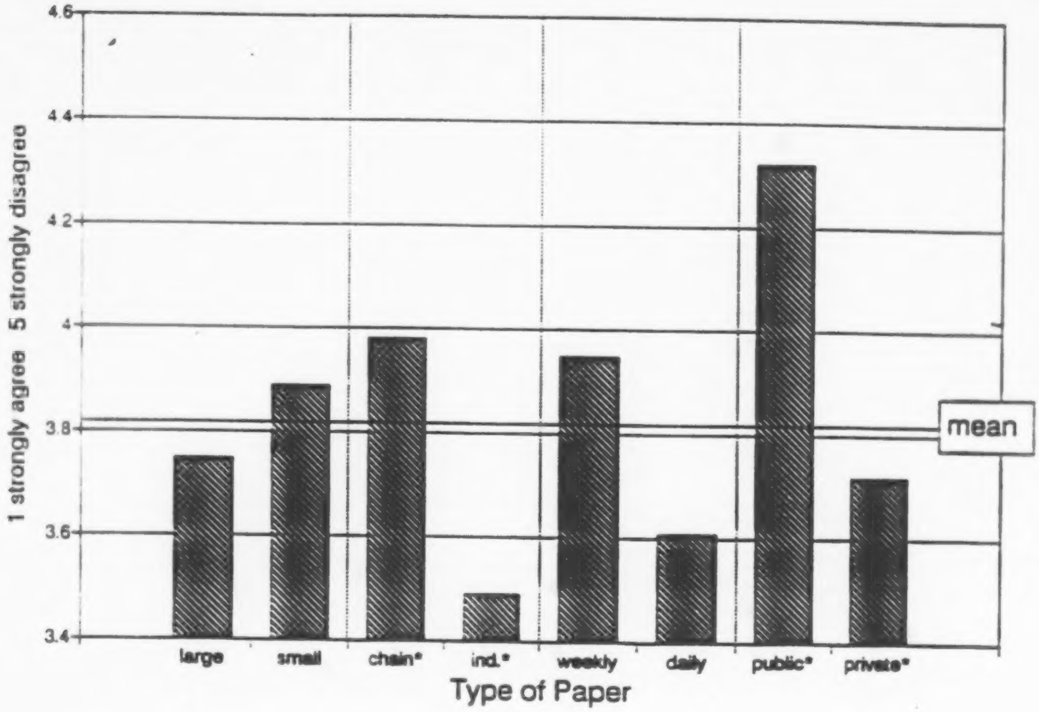
The paper where I work has an adequate staff size to cover the news.



* = significant difference at p<.05. M = 3.81; S.D. = 1.19.

Figure 1. Mean agreement by paper type with adequacy of staff size.

172

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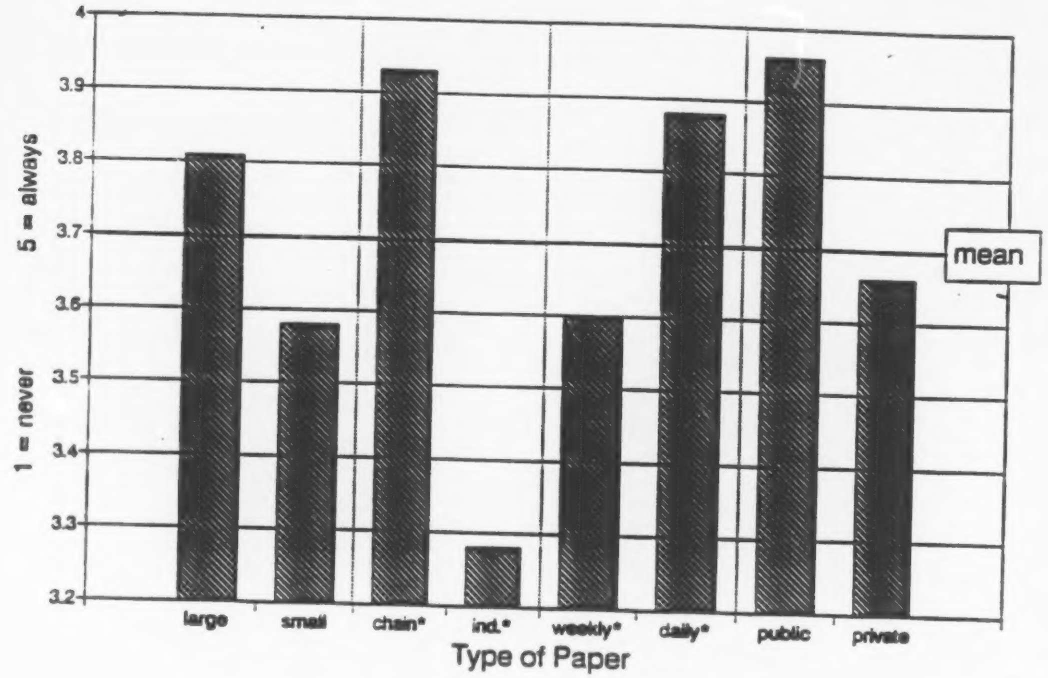
How often does your paper produce special sections?



* = significant difference at p<.05. M = 3.70; S.D. = .940.

Figure 2. Frequency graph by paper type with how often special sections are produced.

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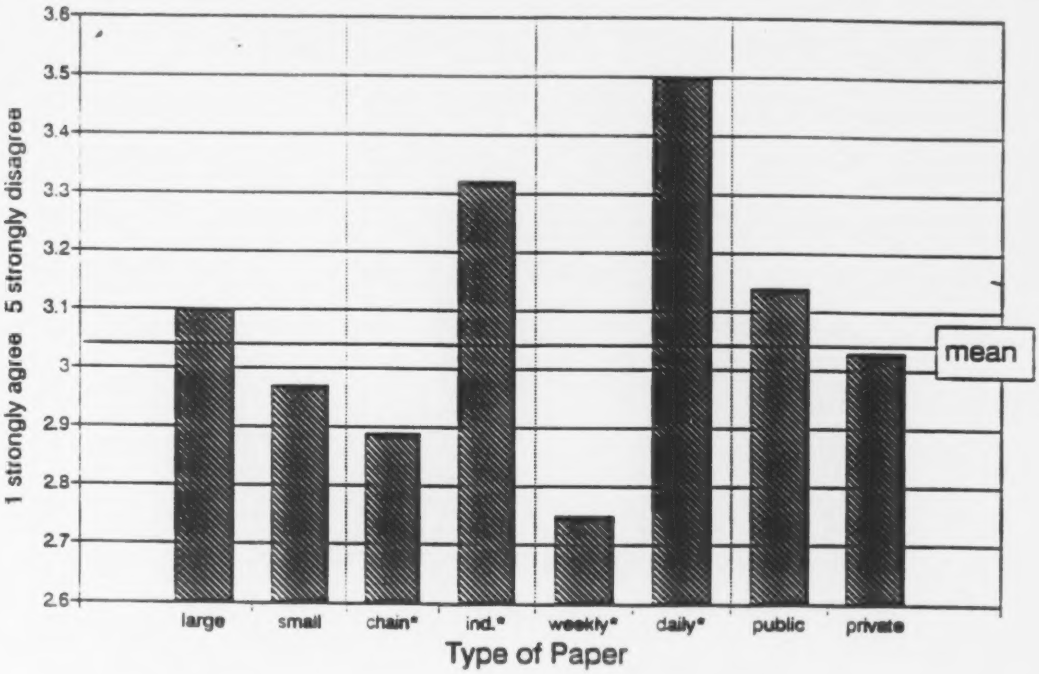
Public relations material fills holes in the newspaper caused by lack of staff.



* = significant difference at p<.05. M = 3.04; S.D. = 1.31.

Figure 3. Mean agreement by paper type with use of public relations materials to fill holes.

I hold newspaper journalists in more esteem than I hold public relations practitioners. The public holds newspaper journalists in more esteem than they hold public relations practitioners.

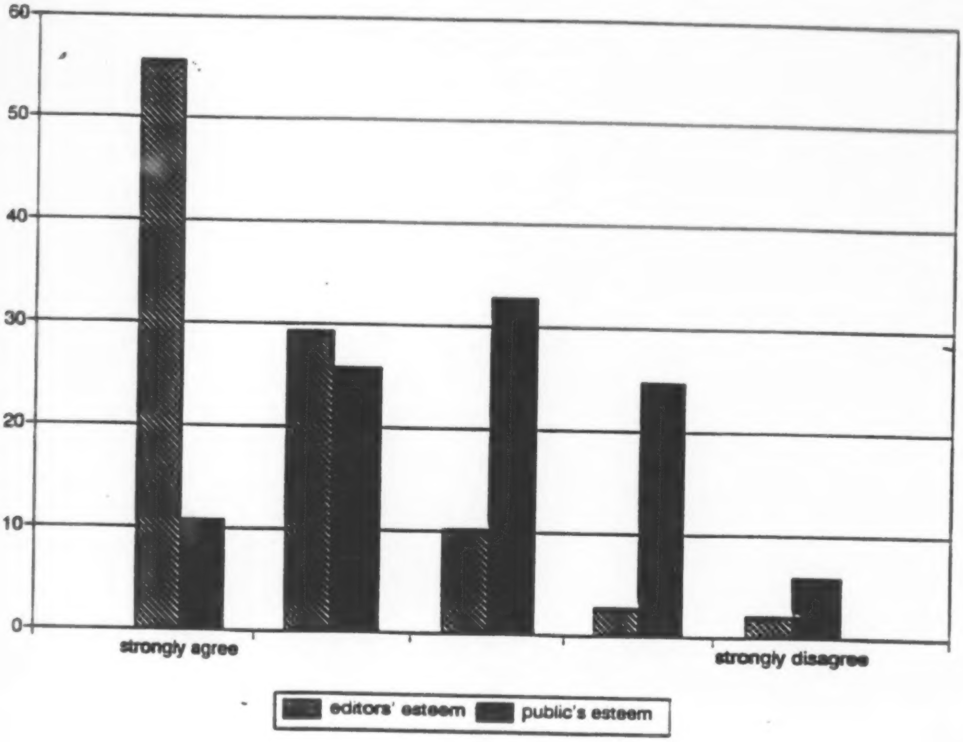


Figure 4. Frequency graph of journalists' esteem and their perceived level of public esteem for themselves versus practitioners.

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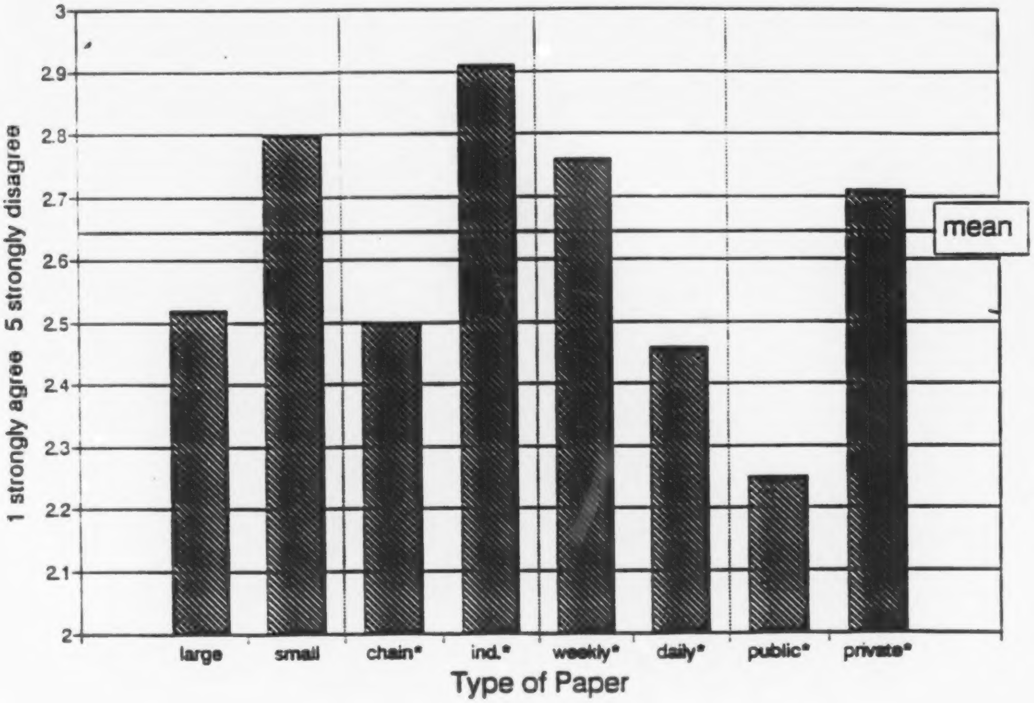
Editors do not trust public relations practitioners.



* = significant difference at p<.05. M = 2.64; S.D. = .989.

Figure 5. Mean agreement by paper type with lack of trust in public relations practitioners.

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Demonstrating Effectiveness in Public Relations:
Goals, Objectives, and Evaluation

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Demonstrating Effectiveness in Public Relations:
Goals, Objectives, and Evaluation

Abstract

Public relations planning and evaluation were explored among 32 practitioners and 10 top executives. Practitioners said their goals reflect the priorities of their institution. The CEOs believed public relations' ultimate aim is communicating the image of the organization. Responses showed many practitioners conduct informal evaluation while only a few conduct formal evaluation. This research suggests public relations planning and evaluation are becoming more systematic but are still constrained by lack of resources and difficulty.

Demonstrating Effectiveness in Public Relations: Goals, Objectives, and Evaluation

Evaluating the effectiveness of public relations continues to be a topic of critical importance to practitioners and scholars. As pressures for accountability mount, practitioners increasingly must demonstrate that public relations activities help achieve meaningful goals for their organization or clients (Johnson, 1994; Kirban, 1983; "Measurement driving more PR programs," 1996).

Academics have long extolled the link between demonstrating public relations effectiveness and evaluation.[1] And, as a result, much attention has been devoted to analyzing public relations measurement techniques (see Broom & Center, 1983; Broom & Dozier, 1983; Broom & Dozier, 1990; Cline, 1984; Dozier, 1984, 1985; J. Grunig, 1977a, 1983; J. Grunig & Hickson, 1983; Suchman, 1967; Wright, 1979).

Although definitions of effectiveness in public relations abound (Hon, 1997), the most predominant theme in scholarly literature and the trade press is that effective public relations occurs when communication activities achieve communication goals (in a cost-efficient manner). Implicit in this model is that public relations goals are derived from the overall organizational mission, goals, and objectives. Thus, through public relations evaluation, practitioners can demonstrate either directly or indirectly public relations' role in organizational goal achievement.

Given the pervasiveness of this model, it is ironic that so little research has been conducted on goal setting and evaluation from practitioners' points of view. The scant bit of research about goal setting in public relations is almost entirely prescriptive--emphasizing what practitioners should be doing rather than illuminating what they really are doing and why. Research on public relations evaluation is much more voluminous than that on goal setting, and it is both descriptive and prescriptive. Yet, this body of work too could be enriched by showcasing practitioners' views of the complex realities they face when trying to evaluate the effectiveness of their public relations efforts.

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[1] Evaluation as used here refers mostly to summative evaluation, or determining whether program goals and objectives have been met (Scriven, 1967).

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this research then is to explore issues surrounding goals, objectives, and evaluation in public relations. The ultimate intent is to develop a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities practitioners face in demonstrating the value of public relations.

The significance of this increased understanding is great. Few scholars or practitioners would dispute that the long-term viability of the public relations function is directly linked to a better understanding of public relations' value-added contribution (see Campbell, 1993; Geduldig, 1986; J. Grunig, L. Grunig, Dozier, Ehling, Repper, & White, 1991; J. Grunig, Dozier, Ehling, L. Grunig, Repper, & White, 1992; Macnamara, 1992; "Measurement popular in U.S.," 1995; Pritchitt, 1994; "Setting benchmarks leads," 1993; Strenski, 1981, 1983; Weiner, 1995; Winokur & Kinkead, 1993). Effectiveness measures that have sufficed in the past (e.g., volume of clippings) often are no longer adequate (Cramp, 1994; Hause, 1993; Houlder, 1994; Sutton, 1988; Wylie & Slovacek, 1984). In other words, public relations output increasingly must be tied to meaningful outcomes for organizations and clients (Holmes, 1996). A critical step in making this connection is setting appropriate goals and measurable objectives.

Research on Public Relations Goals and Objectives

The assumption found in public relations literature is that goals are general guidelines or a framework for the public relations department while objectives are the specific outcomes desired from programs (Grunig and Hunt, 1984). Explaining the distinction further, Kendall (1996) offered the following definitions of goals and objectives, derived from the Accreditation Board of the Public Relations Society of America: A goal is "often related to one specific aspect of the mission or purpose, and commonly described as the desired outcome of a plan of action designed to solve a specific problem over the life of a campaign" (p. 248). An objective, on the other hand, "addresses a specific aspect of the problem with each of several objectives contributing toward achieving the goal" (p. 248). Objectives specify the communication outcome desired, the targeted public, the expected level of attainment, and the time frame in which the outcome is expected to occur.

Other scholars have offered detailed definitions of objectives as well. For example, Swinehart (1979) emphasized that public relations objectives should specify content, target population, when the intended change should occur, whether the changes are unitary or multiple, and how much of an effect is desired (see also Broom and Dozier, 1990; Dozier and Ehling, 1992).

Research on public relations planning shows the impact that MBO (management by objectives) has had on the communication function (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 1985; Dozier & Ehling, 1992; Finn, 1984; Koestler, 1977; Nager, 1984; VanLeuven, 1989; VanLeuven, O'Keefe, & Salmon, 1988). This scholarship typically has stressed the importance of public relations goals and objectives that relate to organizational goals. As Heitpas (1984) argued, public relations objectives should stem from organizational objectives, and they should be oriented toward improvement and clearly defined.

Few studies, though, have explored how well these ideal models for setting public relations goals and objectives hold up in everyday practice. One exception is Barlow's (1993) analysis based on interviews with 31 corporate executives and 16 academicians, a project conducted for the Institute of Public Relations Research and Education. He found that most interviewees thought goal and objective setting in public relations is actually pretty uncomplicated--much more so than evaluation.

However, several respondents disagreed. "I don't worry so much about evaluation," one executive said. "I worry more about setting [public relations] goals that are unrealistic, or that are not directly related to our market-place objectives" (p. 15).

Another executive echoed this sentiment:

> The culture of the company heavily influences this (setting goals and objectives). Ours is a results-oriented management, not yet customer-driven. Defining the results they regard as meaningful is extremely difficult, when communications is only a factor. What hits management directly is what counts with them, and trying to fathom that in terms of realistic goal setting poses real problems. (p. 15)

Whatever their frustrations, though, most practitioners in this study acknowledged their companies' process for setting public relations goals and objectives has become more formalized as the demand for measurable results has increased. Obviously, the systemization of public relations planning is a necessary precursor to meaningful public relations evaluation.

Research on Public Relations Evaluation

Research on public relations evaluation can be divided roughly into several main categories. Of course, some studies have had multiple objectives and fall into than one category. But, for the purpose of explication, multipurpose studies can be grouped here according to what seems to be their main purpose.

The following is by no means an exhaustive review of the literature relevant to public relations evaluation. The goal of this synthesis merely is to provide some examples of the major topics that have been explored (see also Burnstead, 1983; Chapman, 1990; Jacobson, 1980; Lorimer, 1994; Marzano, 1988; Ruff, 1986; Tucker & Shortridge, 1994; Wiesendanger, 1994; Williamson, 1995).

Analyses of Communication Effects

One category of research relevant to public relations evaluation explains how communication effects happen and how threats to internal and external validity limit causal inferences (Campbell and Stanley, 1963; Flay & Cook, 1981; McGuire, 1973; Mendelsohn, 1962, 1973; O'Keefe & Reid, 1990; Rogers & Storey, 1987; Webb & Campbell, 1973). In other words, linking the cause--public relations activities--to some effect--generally assumed to be cognitive, attitudinal, or behavioral--is neither easy nor straightforward.

Yet, Reeves (1983) argued that meaningful evaluation of communication effects goes beyond issues of research design. Evaluation must include evidence along several dimensions. That is, effective evaluation must answer all of the following questions: "What's having an effect (content)?; Who's affected (exposure)?; What changes are desired (effect)?; And, when and how does the effect occur (conditional processes)?

Dozier and Ehling (1992) provided an extensive review of the literature about communication effects and its implications for public relations evaluation. They discussed how many communication programs have assumed the domino model, which implies that communicated messages necessarily will cause changes in knowledge, attitude, and behavior (in that order) among target publics. Pointing out fallacies in this model, they determined the likelihood of achieving behavior change with any member of a target public is only about .04 percent. They explained that, as program objectives move from message exposure to behavioral change, the likelihood of achieving those objectives decreases dramatically.

Prescriptive Research

The next category entails scholarship whose main goal is to outline the evaluation process and point out the importance of evaluation for public relations.[2] In Caro (1977), for example, various types of evaluation were described and several case studies were offered. The authors in this collection of readings argued strongly for the inclusion of evaluation in all social programming.

Weiss' (1972) work also made a strong case for evaluation. But, she discussed numerous constraints such as organizational resistance to change and the tendency of evaluation to show little or no effect. She also mentioned that practitioners too often attempt to evaluate programs for which there is no clear statement of purpose. Or, if objectives are concrete, they are stated as communication activities rather than program effects.

The importance of public relations evaluation that measures impact rather than process was reiterated by Broom and Dozier (1983). They asserted that achieving specific outcomes detailed in public relations program objectives is the yardstick by which success must be measured. For them, focusing on output or viewing public relations outcomes as unmeasurable inhibits the development of public relations as a management function.

These themes were emphasized again by Dozier (1985), who contrasted pseudo planning and pseudo evaluation with true planning and evaluation in public relations. He discussed the tendency to confuse

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[2] Related to prescriptive research about public relations evaluation is McElreath's (1977) discussion of theoretical models of evaluation research. He posited two frameworks for understanding public relations evaluation.

The first of these, a **contingency model**, is concerned with conditions that predict whether public relations evaluation will occur or not. This model implies that degree of environmental uncertainty and problem recognition within the organization are two predictors of when and how public relations evaluation will occur.

By contrast, an **open systems model** emphasizes the dynamics between an organization and its environment. Public relations research and evaluation contribute to organizational effectiveness by supplying information communication products with desired ends. In other words, organizational resources are devoted to measuring output such as number of news release placements and publications rather than specifying desired effects and measuring whether these ends were achieved.

Another example of prescriptive research was provided by O'Neill (1984), who explained the importance of measuring public opinion as part of public relations evaluation. He argued that survey research on corporate reputation is vital given that organizations increasingly are expected to be more responsive to publics. Thus, more public relations research is needed to provide practitioners with information on how publics perceive an organization and how perceptions change.

Similarly, Stamm (1977) warned against collecting evaluation data on the wrong variables or collecting data at the wrong time. For him, meaningful evaluation is contingent upon practitioners' situating evaluation in the proper cognitive context. Practitioners, in conjunction with clients or management, must first determine the when, where, how, and what of evaluation if the process is to be useful (see also Atkin, 1981).

Broom and Dozier's (1990) textbook, Using Research in Public Relations: Applications to Program Management, is the most comprehensive prescription for public relations research and evaluation. In this text, Broom and Dozier discussed how research fits into public relations management, arguing that evaluation is a necessary component of sophisticated public relations practice. That is, without evaluation data, practitioners cannot plan and manage communication programs most effectively.

Case Studies of Public Relations Evaluation

Another category of evaluation research was exemplified by a 1977 special issue of Public Relations Review, which featured examples of public relations research in a variety of institutional settings. For example, Grass (1977) discussed the evaluation of DuPont's corporate advertising. Starting in the 1930s, DuPont began tracking changes in public attitudes toward DuPont and other companies. DuPont found that over time, its

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organizations need to successfully adapt to their environment.

corporate image advertising was having the desired effect, especially its television advertising. People who had been exposed to the campaign demonstrated an overall shift toward favorable attitudes, especially in areas addressed by the campaign. Yet, despite this success, Grass concluded that DuPont was unable to determine the bottom-line value of DuPont's significant investment in the campaign.

J. Grunig (1977b) studied the effectiveness of internal communication at the National Bureau of Standards (now National Institute of Standards and Technology). The conceptual framework used was his situational theory of publics (see J. Grunig and Hunt, 1984). This theory predicts communication behavior based on communicators' recognition of an issue or problem, their involvement in the issue or problem, and their constraint recognition, or the degree to which they feel unable to do something about the issue or problem.

J. Grunig's study suggested that communication effectiveness is maximized by directing communication resources to those publics most likely to need and want information. He uncovered four different employee publics and two publications used most frequently among them. All publics expressed a desire for more information about administration, a topic not covered in any publication. Reviewing J. Grunig's work, Franzen (1977) argued that Grunig's situational theory provides a meaningful framework for evaluating communication effectiveness.

Another case study of public relations evaluation was offered by Tirone (1977), who discussed the Bell System's attempt to develop measures that would assess the overall performance of public relations. To measure the efficiency of employee communications, Bell gauged how effectively a publication was distributed; the company also measured readability, and awareness and understanding among readers. Assessing the effectiveness of media relations, Bell conducted a national study to determine the media's evaluation of the company's materials. The company also content analyzed news stories. However, measuring the effectiveness of Bell System's advertising about long distance services proved to be difficult. So did linking the company's community and educational relations to effectiveness in public relations. With community relations, it was hard to isolate public relations' contribution since so many people were involved (see also Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1977). The problem with educational relations was a lack of clear objectives against which to measure performance. Tirone concluded that, although some component evaluation measures had been developed at Bell, a total system for capturing the value of public relations was elusive.

In the same issue of the Review, Marker (1977) discussed how Armstrong Cork Company developed a systematic program for evaluating the value of its product publicity. He began by explaining that the success of his public relations efforts used to be judged soley by volume of press generated. But, when a marketing executive asked how much all the publicity was really worth, Marker was forced to develop more meaningful measures. One he developed was return on investment, which he calculated by taking the dollar value of print space and broadcast time generated and dividing it by actual project expenditures. The department also began linking customer inquiries to specific placements. Summing up the success of the evaluation program, Marker concluded: "No one asks us what PR is 'worth' any more--they know what it's worth. And they can see much more clearly how it ties into the corporate marketing effort" (p. 59, emphasis in original).

A later case study of public relations evaluation was provided by Larson and Massetti-Miller (1984). They examined the effectiveness of a public education campaign to promote recycling. The post-campaign public opinion surveys showed little change in attitudes or recycling behavior. Larson and Massetti-Miller concluded that the campaign may have failed because it relied too heavily on mass media at the expense of strategies encouraging interpersonal communication and individual participation. They also suggested that the finding of few effects may be due to the campaign's success at merely reinforcing existing behaviors that otherwise might have discontinued (see also Files, 1984; Hyman & Sheatsley, 1947).

A focus on research in public relations was revisited by the Review in a 1990 special issue. One article profiled a readership survey conducted by Pavlik, Vastyan, and Maher (1990). These researchers found moderate support for their hypotheses that level of organizational integration (functional and psychological) and importance of organizational surveillance (system functions and social network) among employees was related positively to level of newsletter readership. This research helped evaluate who is likely to read the newsletter and what content readers are looking for.

Another case study was a field experiment designed to test learning from a health campaign. Rosser, Flora, Chaffee, and Farquhar (1990) evaluated the effects of a six-year campaign designed to provide information about heart disease. Not surprisingly, they found that a number of variables--such as age, risk, gender, level of prior knowledge, and educational level--affected subjects' learning from the campaign.

More recently Watson (1995) profile four case studies of public relations evaluation in the United Kingdom. He chose this methodology because he thought the models of evaluation promoted in the U.S. literature "have not been tested against the normal constraints of practice" (p. 4). Among the case studies, Watson found both a short-term and a long-term model of public relations evaluation. In one short-term case, a three-month lobbying campaign, evaluation of effectiveness was "quickly visible" and "could be expressed as a Yes or No result" (p. 4). The government found money for a project and the organization's lobbying efforts ceased.

Two of the case studies--a major industrial redevelopment and a proposal for a new community--involved long-term evaluation efforts. As Watson explained:

> The planning and development issues embodied in the two projects were so sensitive that no pre-testing of attitudes could be undertaken. In one of them, it may still be too sensitive to poll some publics. At the industrial redevelopment, research has been used to validate the community relations programme and modify it for the future. An iterative loop has been used and continues to be used to sustain a continuing public relations process. (p. 4)

Two more case studies of public relations evaluation were provided by Knobloch (1996). She used time series analysis to track media articles before and after a manufacturer responded to charges of selling products detrimental to consumers' health. She also profiled a campaign where seven press mailings induced 190 neutral or positive articles. Knobloch explained that the time series method projects data before the public relations intervention to the period after the public relations activity. Thus, one can infer what would have happened without the intervention as well as the effect of the intervention. Although Knobloch's study is limited to publicity tracking, sophisticated methods such as time series analysis may provide a framework for modeling other public relations functions and outcomes (see also Ehling, 1992).

Some case studies of evaluation have attempted to measure relationship indicators rather than informational, attitudinal, and behavioral effects on publics. Most often, the theoretical framework used is coorientation, which posits communication understanding, accuracy, and agreement as measures of a relationship (see Broom, 1977; Broom and Dozier, 1990; Dozier & Ehling, 1992).

One example comes from Bowes and Stamm (1975), who determined in their study of a public agency that the agency's information sources did not increase accuracy among publics about the agency's stands even though the public believed that the communication did. These researchers also discovered that there was more agreement among groups studied than the groups thought. Bowes and Stamm concluded that relationship measures, such as accuracy and agreement, can provide meaningful evaluation data that might be missed by self reports of knowledge and attitude (see also J. Grunig & Stamm, 1973; Hesse, 1976; Knodell, 1976; Stegall & Sanders, 1986).

In 1984, Ferguson suggested that relationships between organizations and publics become a primary focus of theory building in public relations. She posited many variables related to public relationships that could be evaluated: the degree to which the relationship is dynamic versus static and open versus closed; the degree of satisfaction one or both parties derives from the relationship; how much control parties believe they have; the distribution of power in the relationship; whether parties believe they share goals; and whether there is understanding and agreement.

Despite Ferguson's call, though, little evaluation of public relations has focused on relationships. Making this point, Broom, Casey, and Ritchey (1997) said:

> Many scholars and practitioners say that public relations is all about building and maintaining an organization's relationships with its publics. However, anyone reading the literature of the field would have difficulty finding a useful definition of such relationships in public relations. Instead, it appears that authors assume that readers know and agree on the meaning and measurement of the important concept of relationship. Unfortunately, the assumption is not supported by evidence. (p. 83)

Broom et al. went on to explain that public relations evaluation typically only measures impact on one or both sides of the relationship and then makes inferences about the relationship. In other words, no direct measures of the relationship itself are made.

Also exploring evaluation of relationships in public relations is a task force established in 1996 at an Evaluation Summit sponsored by Ketchum Public Relations and the Institute for Public Relations Research and Education. As Kitty Ward, president of K. Ladd Ward and Company and member of the task force, explained: "My perspective is that most, if not all, of marketing and public relations has to do with changing or building relationships. I wonder if we shouldn't go at this (public relations measurement) from the point of view of evaluating these relationships" (quoted in "Seeking minimum standards," 1996, p. 16-17).

Another task force member, Professor James Grunig of the University of Maryland, agreed, arguing that most of the outcomes practitioners try to measure tend to occur "too far down the road" (if at all) to be helpful in demonstrating public relations effectiveness (p. 16). Given this dilemma, J. Grunig argued that public relations needs to evaluate maintenance strategies (e.g., building coalitions of management and publics) that are predictors of relationship outcomes such as commitment and trust.

Status and Types of Public Relations Evaluation

The final category of research about public relations evaluation includes Lindenmann's 1988 survey of research activity among public relations professionals in the United States (published in Lindenmann, 1990; see also Booth, 1986; Broom & Dozier, 1983; Chapman 1982; Grunig, 1977a; Leffingwell, 1975). His results suggested a mix picture. A clear majority of respondents believed that public relations evaluation is and can be an integral part of programming. And, more than half agreed that it is possible to measure public relations outcomes, impact, and effectiveness precisely. Moreover, most respondents said they allocate funds for public relations research and that the volume of research projects they are involved in has increased.

On the other hand, Lindenmann found that more than 90 percent of survey respondents believed that public

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relations research is still more talked about than actually done. And, about 70 percent thought that most public relations research is still "casual and informal rather than scientific and precise" (p. 15). Lindenmann concluded that, although the status of evaluation in public relations had improved since the 1960s and 1970s, there is "still a considerable distance to travel" (p. 15).

Bissland (1990) also addressed the status of evaluation in public relations by reviewing the 60 winning case summaries from the 1980-1981 Silver Anvil competition. He compared these to the 72 winners from 1988--1989. In 1982, PRSA had specified that all entries should include a section on evaluation.

Bissland found three main categories of evaluation among the cases: **(1) measures of communication output** (e.g., quantity of output, number of media contacts, quality and quantity of media placements), (2) **measures of intermediate effect** (effects on key audiences such as number who attended to the message or participated in an event; audience feedback; and behavior science measurements--awareness, attitude, understanding, behavior), and (3) **measures of organizational goal achievement** (e.g., numbers of products sold, new members recruited, funds raised, legislation passed or defeated).

The most frequently used evaluation measures were output and intermediate effects--36 percent, and 39.6 percent, respectively. Measures of organizational achievement accounted for only 24.6 percent and some of these were inferred rather than substantiated.

Yet, Bissland was able to show meaningful progress in evaluation during the decade examined. The number of different evaluation methods rose from a mean of 3.6 to 4.57, which was a statistically significant difference ($p < .01$). In 1988-1989, more practitioners were using behavioral science measures--44.4 percent, up from 25 percent in 1980-1981 (significant at $p < .05$). Also, the increase in measures of organizational goal achievement was significant--28.6 percent, up from 18.5 percent ($p < .001$).

Bissland concluded that the status of evaluation in public relations did improve in the 1980s. Yet, in 1988-1989, still over half of the entries lacked rigorous methods. And, twice as many contained unsubstantiated claims of goal achievement as substantiated ones.

Barlow's (1993, cited earlier) assessment of public relations evaluation revealed that many scholars and practitioners he interviewed believe meaningful measurement is hampered by widespread lack of research sophistication among communication professionals. However, a majority said that the tools for measuring "just about anything" do exist (p. 10). The respondents acknowledged, though, that a macro-level measurement of public relations' value is baffling. And, some made the point that developing this macro measure--such as a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis--may not be worth it, given the time and money needed to do so.

Barlow also examined the status of expenditures for communication research. Nine of the 31 corporate executives said that their research budget has gone up but there was no clear pattern as to why. And, among those whose budget was about the same, there was a tendency to protect evaluation. "We're real proud of the fact that we didn't have to cut here," said one executive (quoted in Barlow, p. 44). For those facing cuts, the reasons were obvious--the recent recession and downsizing. Overall, though, the majority of practitioners thought that top management is "generally supportive" about spending money on research (p. 45).

Watson (1994) examined the status of public relations evaluation in the United Kingdom by surveying a random sample of members of the Institute of Public Relations. His results were similar to U.S. survey findings: Public relations evaluation is hindered in the United Kingdom by lack of research knowledge, clients' and employers' unwillingness to devote resources to evaluation, and practitioners' reluctance to tie objective performance measures to their programs.

Watson (1995) later cross-checked his U.K. survey with a sample of 30 practitioners from 25 countries. He found that the barriers to evaluation uncovered in the UK survey were mirrored worldwide: lack of time, lack of personnel, lack of budget, cost of evaluation, doubts about usefulness, lack of knowledge, and aversion to scientific methodology [see also Baerns' (1993) study of evaluation in Germany].

Other researchers have focused specifically on identifying types of public relations evaluation. For example, Lerbinger's 1977 analysis of corporate use of research identified four main categories--**environmental monitoring**, **public relations audits**, **communication audits**, and **social audits**. Environmental monitoring was used by organizations to gauge public opinion and observe social and political events that may impact the organization. The most common research technique Lerbinger found was the public relations audit, the most comprehensive of which involves assessing relevant publics, an organization's standing with publics, issues of concern to publics, and power of publics. A communications audit evaluates the effectiveness of an organization's communication products among internal and external audiences. Typically included here were readership and readability studies and content analysis of publications. And, last, Lerbinger found that organizations were using social audits to asses how they are performing as corporate citizens although there was little agreement about what this evaluation method entails (see also Reeves & Ferguson-DeThorne, 1980).

Also addressing types of evaluation, Swinehart (1979) outlined four levels of evaluation--**process, quality, intermediate objectives**, and **ultimate objectives**. Process refers to measuring the preparation and dissemination of communication materials. Evaluation of quality has to do with features of communication materials or programs--their accuracy, clarity, production values, and suitability for the audience. Evaluating intermediate objectives typically involves looking at precursors, such as media placement, to ultimate objectives. This last category--ultimate objectives--has to do with assessing effects on the target audience's knowledge, attitudes, or behavior.

Similarly, Lindenmann (1993) presented a yardstick for measuring public relations effectiveness, which included basic, intermediate, and advanced evaluation. The basic level involves measuring **outputs** or media placements, impressions, and targeted audiences. The intermediate level, or public relations **outgrowths**, has to do with evaluating reception, awareness, comprehension, and retention among target publics (p. 8). Last, advanced evaluation measures public relations **outcomes** such as opinion, attitude, and behavior change (see also Lindenmann, 1988, 1995).

Perhaps the most comprehensive scholarship about types of evaluation comes from Dozier. Using data from a 1981 survey of practitioners. Dozier (1984) uncovered three types of evaluation. **Scientific impact** evaluation is the most formal of the three and involves evaluating public reaction to the organization and public relations programs before, during, and after implementation. **Seat-of-the-pants** evaluation uses informal techniques (e.g., feedback from media contacts) to gauge program impact. And, last, **scientific dissemination**, involves systematically measuring the distribution of messages.

Dozier then correlated types of evaluation and practitioner roles. He determined that technicians are unlikely to use any type of evaluation. Managers predominately use seat-of-the-pants evaluation to augment measurement of scientific impact (see also Dozier, 1985, 1990).

Lesly (1986) addressed "levels of measurability" in public relations but dealt with intangible as well as tangible effects (p. 6; see also Lesly, 1991). He argued that many of the most valuable contributions public relations makes go beyond the outcomes of specific activities that can be measured easily with numbers. In other words, some indicators of public relations effectiveness defy numerical measurement.

Lesly called the first level of evaluating intangibles **semi-specific** measurement. As an example, he mentioned practitioners' assessing "the reaction to a presentation before a Senate committee, or to an officer's speech" (p. 6). No numerical measurement is implied yet a judgment can be made about the effectiveness of public relations.

The next level was **acceptance on the basis of judgment**. This occurs when management believes on faith that public relations efforts have been effective in areas such as working with minority, community, and church groups.

Lesly also mentioned **recognizing the value of input from public relations people** as an intangible evaluation measure. Here, public relations might be judged on how effective the department is at monitoring public opinion and keeping management abreast.

Last, Lesly posited **prevention** and **guidance** as key measures of public relations effectiveness. He argued that preventing negative outcomes, such as bad press, may be the best indicator of public relations success. Similarly, the ongoing guidance public relations provides, "like a car--operating so quietly that no one is concerned with it," is a strong testimonial to effectiveness (p. 7).

Geduldig (1986), however, took issue with the argument that intangible public relations outcomes demonstrate value. He maintained that public relations departments must establish concrete measurement systems to justify their existence to others:

> A hard-nosed manager would have a tough job evaluating a function that cannot be defined and can do well when it does nothing....Don't expect others to buy public relations on faith. If public relations doesn't set standards of measurement that are both objective and meaningful, management will apply its own, and the value of public relations will ultimately be measured against the bottom line. (p. 6)

Research Questions

Geduldig's assertion underscores the need for a better understanding of the intricacies involved in setting public relations goals and objectives and conducting meaningful evaluation. This study explored the challenges and opportunities involved in these tasks among a selected group of public relations practitioners and top executives. The following research questions were posed:

--What do practitioners and other managers consider the main goals and objectives for public relations at their organization?

--What do they think is the link between goals and objectives for public relations and goals and objectives for their organization?

--How do they evaluate public relations?

Methodology

These research questions were investigated through in-depth, non-directed interviews with 32 public relations practitioners and 10 other executives.[3] A qualitative method was chosen to provide the opportunity for respondents to discuss research topics from their point of view rather than responding to structured categories. Qualitative research seemed especially fitting given the multifaceted issues and perspectives uncovered in the literature review.

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[3] These other managers were recruited by asking practitioners if they thought the CEO or another top manager would be willing to be interviewed about the research questions. Obviously, the executives who agreed to be interviewed may value public relations more than others do. This likelihood should be kept in mind when assessing the findings.

Sampling

The interviewees were selected following Broom and Dozier's (1990) guidelines for nonprobability sampling. The type of sampling used was a combination of snowball and dimensional. Snowballing, or asking initial interviewees to suggest other interviewees, served to expand the list of participants from the original handful (drawn from the researcher's professional contacts) to the final 32.

When recruiting participants, two dimensions also were considered to ensure diversity among the group--type of organization and level of experience. A wide array of organizations throughout the United States was assembled--corporations, government, nonprofits, associations, and public relations agencies. And, although most of the practitioners (and all of the other managers) are seasoned executives, some junior-level practitioners deliberately were chosen. The rationale here was that those relatively new to the field might have a different perspective given that evaluation increasingly is stressed in public relations curricula.

Interview Procedure

With the exception of three interviews, which were held face to face, all of the interviews were conducted over the phone. The three research questions served as **grand tour** questions (Spradley, 1979, 1980), which provided the over-arching framework for the interviews. When appropriate, probes were used to elicit explanatory information and examples. And, as typical with qualitative inquiry, interviewees brought up related issues unprompted.

After conducting the 42 interviews and an initial review of findings, the researcher determined closure was appropriate. At this point, the emerging data seemed sufficient to provide meaningful insight into the areas addressed by the research questions.

Snow (1980) referred to this aspect of qualitative research as "informational sufficiency" and described its three dimensions (p. 103). **Taken-for grantedness** occurs when very little respondents say surprises the researcher and the interviews begin to seem routine. **Theoretical saturation** describes diminishing returns--the additional data add very little novel or useful information. And, finally, a **heightened confidence** occurs when the researcher feels the "findings are faithful to the empirical world under study and shed light on preexisting or emergent questions and propositions" (p. 104).

Data Analysis

Interview data next were transcribed, and responses were arranged under the research question they answered. The findings then were synthesized with the dual purpose of revealing common themes or trends and uncovering the range of response, or to what extent practitioners' and other managers' experiences and examples diverge.

Successfully achieving this purpose is the measure of any qualitative study's merit. As Lindlof (1995) pointed out, the conventional canons of research reliability and validity do not fit the qualitative paradigm very well. Based on interpretive assumptions, qualitative research recognizes "the constantly changing character of social reality" (p. 238). Thus, "little is gained from trying to achieve reliability," or consistency of results (p. 238).

Assessing validity is also difficult because qualitative inquiry assumes the world consists of "multiple, constructed realities" (p. 238). Therefore no single representation can be identified as the criterion for valid measurement. Lindlof pointed out that concerns about external validity also are suspect since "the qualitative researcher studies social action and cultural sensibility situated in time and place" (p. 238). For this reason, generalizations are "neither warranted nor particularly desirable" (p. 238).

Lindlof's arguments, however, do not imply that qualitative researchers lack credible and dependable data. As he said: "Basically we want to inspire confidence in our readers (and ourselves) that we have achieved right interpretations. Notice that I do not say the right interpretation. There are many possible interpretations of a case"

(p. 238, emphasis in original).

One method for ensuring meaningful interpretations is member checks, whereby investigators elicit critiques of their data analysis (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The member check conducted for this study involved 10 of the research participants, who were asked to review the major topics and themes that the researcher had identified in the data.[4] These participants validated the efficacy of the findings by confirming that these topics and themes were accurate interpretations of their answers to the research questions.

Findings

Public Relations Goals and Objectives

There was tremendous variability in the answers to the question about goals and objectives for public relations, perhaps because of the diversity of organizations represented. Each department divides its responsibilities differently and, not surprisingly, *priorities tend to reflect the mission of the organization.* For example, practitioners employed by corporations tended to mention communication goals that support the bottom line--increasing sales and revenue and bringing in new business. Other practitioners talked more about public relations' role in enhancing the image of the organization and disseminating positive messages.

Most of the interviewees said that their public relations department does have written, quantifiable goals and objectives although several acknowledged that this systemization happened somewhat recently. Only one practitioner--a public affairs adviser for an oil company--said that his department has no written goals and objectives. He described a situation of great instability where the business units of his organization are driving public affairs goals, while corporate public affairs is being downsized drastically.

A few others said that their organization is moving toward a more goal-oriented approach but it is not there yet. For example, a communication manager for a trade association said that setting public relations goals and objectives is a "process that we're still working out." She explained that public relations traditionally has been geared toward "really nebulous concepts such as good will and outreach." One reason is that the organization has suffered from a lack of data on which to base more concrete objectives. She also mentioned people's tendency to keep "doing things the way they did them in the past."

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[4] Member checks also may involve people who are not actually involved in the research project but are

A similar response came from a marketing communications manager at a private university. She said that public relations goals typically have been vague and more "intuitive" than explicit. She said that increased competition among universities has brought the realization that public relations goals have to be more precise.

The most recurring theme in practitioners' responses was that *public relations goals and objectives have to be "strategic,"* meaning that public relations goals and objectives must be tied directly to organizational goals and objectives. Many said that this strategic goal setting takes place every year, although some described a more long-term approach such as a two- or three-year plan.

A community liaison for a national health institute said that her department sets goals and objectives that are "in line with institutional goals and overall objectives for each year." Each person's personal goals have to support the communication programs that help the department fulfill the broader goals of the organization--such as increasing patient volume.

A director of corporate communications for a government contracting firm also stressed that public relations has to be "tied to goals of the organization." Her department looks to the CEO's published goals--such as diversification--and then writes a plan based on those.

The importance of this link was emphasized by a CEO of a public relations agency. She said that too often public relations goals become separate from the organizational goals and then the function seems expendable. She warned against creating "isolated, separate" goals such as increased publicity that are merely a means to an end. For her, public relations goals should match clients' broader goals, such as increasing market share or sales.

Several other agency executives also emphasized that public relations goals must focus on the "end result"

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members of the "culture" being investigated.

expected. As one senior vice president said:

> The first thing you ask the client is, "What do you want to happen as a result of PR activity?" You try to get as specific as possible. It can be a change in awareness, buying behavior, but not "supporting" something. The client has an outcome in mind. At the end of your contract, they are going to make a decision about whether you did what they want.

A similar process was described by a marketing communication associate for a management consulting firm. As she explained, her agency first uncovers what the client ultimately wants. The group then determines the target audience. At that point, goals and objectives can be specified. One practitioner in particular--a national vice president of public affairs for a health association--emphasized that public relations goals should lead to quantifiable objectives. As he explained:

> As companies become more and more fixated on the bottom line, maintaining a healthy cash flow, cutting the fat, on downsizing or rightsizing, it becomes more and more important for the public relations function or communications function, like every other function, to be measurable, to show measurable results, and that of course opens the door to really good, solid, quantifiable objectives.

Among the other managers who were interviewed, the most common response was that *public relations' ultimate aim is communicating the image of the organization.* An executive vice president of a health association was emphatic on this point: "Our success depends on our ability to communicate with the public--being believable as an organization, giving them (the public) credible information. Raising funds, being supported by the public, depends on our public image. PR is part of that image."

Similarly, a president of a state university said that the goal of public relations is "to tell the story of the institution, to inform the public about what's going on, to let people know the value they earn for the investment they make in the institution." He also noted, "Obviously, there is a 'best foot forward' side of PR, which I think is their ongoing basic responsibility."

A CEO of a food products company mentioned that public relations should be carrying the organization's "proper message" to internal and external audiences. A senior vice president for a health benefits provider also referred to public relations' responsibility as "any involvement that gets [name of company] communicated externally and internally."

Only one top executive--a manager of federal relations for an oil company--was indefinite about public relations' mission. He said that communication goals are "nebulous" and "hard to pin down." Direction for public relations is in flux, depending upon the whim of Congress and federal and state regulatory agencies. Yet, the overall scheme is to push for legislative initiatives that do not "negatively affect" the organization's refining and marketing efforts.

The Link Between Public Relations and Organizational Goals and Objectives

Most interviewees stated that *the connection between public relations and organizational goal achievement is very clear to them and, for the most part, others in the organization.* For example, a vice president of membership for a trade association said that "everything we do" relates to the organizational mission:

> It's very simple--from our magazine, to the way we market and put on our education programs, through our development of membership and our service to membership--everything we do is promoting and enhancing responsible and effective philanthropy. We don't do it unless there is a direct link.

Similarly, a director of public relations for a health benefits provider said that public relations is part of "every thread of the fabric" at her institution--"so intertwined, you can't separate" public relations goals from the organization's mission. She explained that since the organization's activities are controversial, the agency "inherently needs PR to explain [itself] to constituents and provide a channel for constituents to give feedback."

The link also was clear to a director of public affairs for a highway safety coalition. She talked about how crucial the organization's media relations is to keeping issues before the public and Congress. She also thought that the president of the organization recognizes effective public relations is the organization's lifeline.

"The president truly values PR; she is media savvy," she said. "If anything, maybe she relies on it too much in the 11th hour. But, that's a nice problem for a PR person to have."

A national vice president of public affairs for a health association also had no trouble associating public relations with organizational goals:

> By constantly putting our messages out there and associating them with our name, the public has a heightened sense of our mission and is more pliant when it comes to supporting it. Our role is that controversies are headed off, successes are featured, information flows constantly, and that, in turn, creates very high name recognition. It's not by accident that these things happen. That's our role in making sure that the organization is successful.

However, some practitioners thought *the link between public relations and organizational goal achievement is obscure*. For example, a vice president of corporate communications for a mortgage company thought that when it comes to bringing in new business, public relations' contribution is not so obvious.

"It's difficult to link getting loans to something we have done," she said. "It's more in the relationship building than bringing loans in the door. It's a lag effect."

A marketing specialist for a management consulting firm also alluded to the difficulty of definitively relating some public relations outcomes to organizational goals. Convincing others in her organization of the value of effective communication therefore is not easy. As she said:

> They are looking for a return on investment. They are looking at how much we put in versus how much we get out. I have tried to explain that it's difficult to measure. PR has not been able to provide quantitative, tangible results, but it's good at providing qualitative results.

A CEO of a public relations agency also talked about the difficulty of convincing others of the relationship between public relations goals and organizational success:

> Sometimes one of our biggest challenges is proving our value. The more we can align PR goals with corporate goals, the better--to show that PR is not just in support of those goals, but very much a part of achieving those goals.

The need for public relations to prove its worth also was emphasized by a public relations director for a private school. She too believed that public relations needs to show how its goals fit into the organization's.

"You have to look at the criterion of whether or not it (a public relations goal) is contributing to the bottom line of the organization or its goals," she said. "If it doesn't directly contribute, then I would say it's not necessary."

Perhaps the most grim situation was described by a communication manager for an animal rights and conservation organization. She described the link between public relations and the organization's mission as "not very strong." She thought there was a "huge gap between what public affairs does and what organizational leaders think."

"The ideal model works only on paper," she said. "I don't see communications incorporated as much as it could be--except in a crisis. Then it's, 'Man the torpedoes; you guys do something.'"

This practitioner thought part of the problem is that others in the organization do not understand public relations since the outcomes tend to be less tangible than other functions. Making this point, she recalled how, after one of her particularly successful efforts, a scientist at her organization grudgingly stated during a meeting, "My [new] advice to everyone here is don't run away from [name of practitioner] when she comes down the hall."

CEOs and other managers offered a variety of perspectives about how public relations goals relate to the organization. A CEO of a food products company described a "firm link" between public relations and the organizational mission, noting that the vice president of corporate communications is very involved in strategic planning for the organization.

However, a development director for a private university acknowledged that public relations has not fed into her activities as much as it could. She said, though, that public relations and fundraising increasingly are mapping out mutual goals.

In two relatively new organizations, competing viewpoints were offered. A CEO of a national health institute thought that proactive public relations is fundamental to achieving the organization's goal of establishing itself as a premier institution.

On the other hand, a senior vice president of a health benefits provider thought that because his organization is so new, the link between public relations and organizational goals is not "as strong as it is for established organizations with specific strategies for public-corporate stewardship." He described his company's public relations activities to date as reactive, stating that proactive public relations happens only as companies evolve.

"Most of the people here aren't that aware of professional PR," he said. "It's not totally respected because of the difficulty in developing value proofs that say, 'If you put the resources here, this is what you get back.'"

Still others provided more perspectives on the connection between public relations and organizational goals. A president of a state university said that "PR is the window on the external world about the institution and its mission and how well it is progressing toward realizing its mission."

Similarly, the president of a government contracting firm believed that public relations supports the organization's strategic plans: "Every company has a vision of where it wants to be. If we want to change the image, public relations would assist in providing that support." But, he said that there is not "much connectivity on a day-to-day basis" between public relations goals and the organization's mission. Instead, public relations' contribution is more long term.

Evaluating Public Relations

Responses to the question about public relations evaluation ranged from conducting *virtually no evaluation* to performing *formal and on-going* efforts. However, despite this range, none of the interviewees disregarded the need for public relations evaluation. Some practitioners said that, although they do not feel pressure to show how the needle moved for every public relations activity, they still must demonstrate "value." Others were emphatic about showing measurable results.

Not surprisingly, many respondents commented on how difficult public relations evaluation is. They bemoaned inadequate resources--time, staff, and money--as well as the intangible nature of some public relations goals.

A director of university relations for a state university referred to evaluation as the "Achilles heel" of public relations. As he said:

> It's real easy to measure things that don't matter and very difficult to measure things that do matter. The end result of our efforts here should be changes, enhancements in attitudes of carefully defined publics....It doesn't matter how many stories get placed; attitudes count. We need statistically valid attitude research.

This practitioner went on to characterize the university as lagging behind others in market research. Just this year, the Office of Institutional Studies will do its first comprehensive stakeholder survey, which will provide him with baseline data. He mentioned, though, that public relations' needs are considered "perimeter" rather than "center" to the study.

A vice president of membership for a trade association was skeptical in general about public relations evaluation. She believed that effectiveness is just too slippery:

> I'm not sure you ever really know with public relations. Yes, you can evaluate an event, a mood, an opinion poll, but from the view of 20 odd years, that can change overnight....Any company that says their public relations is absolutely effective is kidding itself.

A similar theme was heard from a public relations director at a trade association:

> Effectiveness in communications is always very difficult to measure. You spend an awful lot of energy and time and resources and you probably don't even know the effect until maybe years later....You just work on going after your goal. And, it's not that you are hit or miss; you know certain things from experience. But, you don't sit down and analyze that.

A vice president of corporate communications for a food products company also was doubtful about public relations evaluation: "We are not turning in sales reports on a weekly or monthly basis by which we can be judged. A lot of this is intangible."

He acknowledged, though, that "the demand for measurable results is increasing" and that research is "vital" and often "the bread and butter of many successful programs." However, at his company, the budget is just not there. As he explained:

> The difficulty really comes in the budgetary area. When you are having to watch costs very closely, there is little support for going outside to embark upon a major and costly program to help you determine just how well you are doing.

Despite constraints, though, most practitioners were doing some sort of evaluation. The measures used typically varied by type of program and target audience.

Several practitioners referred to their evaluation as *informal*, mentioning feedback from audiences or others in the organization about public relations' products or services. For example, a publications editor for a trade association said that her department relies on "oral communication from other departments, members calling in, letters from members."

However, a senior vice president of a national agency disparaged this approach, arguing that "informal evaluation is about as good as kissing your sister." She described her agency's evaluation as formal and contingent upon the goals of the campaign.

"The days of companies spending lots to get their name in the paper are over," she said. "Our clients are specific."

Other agency executives disagreed. A communication associate for a management consulting firm thought that clients often want nothing more from public relations than "get my name in the paper."

A CEO of another agency thought selling clients on evaluation can be difficult because clients think that public relations is free advertising and therefore should not cost a lot. Still another agency vice president thought clients often do not understand research or place little faith in the measure of public relations activities. Thus, evaluation at her agency amounts to little more than tallying media impressions or counting heads at special events.

Some practitioners were doing little or no evaluation but planned to do more. A director of public relations for a health benefits provider explained that, before she joined her company, the CEO's yardstick for evaluating public relations was "whether or not a good time was had by all." She wants, however, to begin conducting survey research that would provide benchmark data about levels of brand awareness. The survey then would be repeated every six months or year. She believes other managers will support the project because "they would like to know they have measurable results; TQM (Total Quality Management) has brought this mentality."

Evaluation techniques described by other practitioners were those one would expect to find in public relations--conducting *focus groups* and *readership and customer surveys*; *monitoring government research*; and *tracking media placement, attendance at events, store traffic, calls to 1-800 numbers, and "hits" on the organization's World Wide Web homepage.*

Some practitioners evaluated behavioral objectives almost exclusively, which they feel makes measurement straightforward. An example was a director of alumni relations for a state university who said that evaluation is "kind of easy." Her department gauges its ultimate success by tracking donations.

Similarly, an executive director of a trade association explained that at his organization "measurement is built in," and the measure is "specific regulatory action." Referring to the organization's members, he said: "They don't care if we increased awareness or opinions if their ultimate goal was not achieved. They don't care about winning the battles if you lose the war. They don't want to spend money on the battles."

A management associate for a passenger railroad also thought that the acid test for public relations is effects on behavior. As the company cuts services in some states, the measure of effective public relations has been whether those states buy the lines back. This practitioner went on to explain that the pressure to downsize and rightsize has been so intense recently that the only outcome management really cares about is whether or not the organization survives.

Perhaps the most debatable issue among these practitioners had to do with evaluating media placement. Almost all of the interviewees mentioned using clipping services. However, opinions about the value of doing so varied greatly.

A senior vice president of a national agency summarily dismissed clippings: "You might as well count press releases....You still have to tie it (placement) to some impact."

However, a director of corporate communications for a government contracting firm said that her organization has "found very elaborate ways to quantify how much press we have gotten and what kind." She said that the company has become more "sophisticated in quantifying that (media placement) in terms of advertising dollars." She also is tracking "inroads into trade publications and newspapers important to us."

Most other practitioners were ambivalent about the worth of evaluating media placement. They acknowledged that placement may indicate message exposure. But, as an agency CEO said, placement is not the "panacea" of public relations evaluation.

One example of *systematic, on-going evaluation* was provided by a director of external relations for an international exchange organization. She explained that before the association's yearly conference, her department does a "needs assessment survey." The results are used to plan the conference. A follow-up survey and focus groups then are conducted.

"We tend to evaluate projects like this," she said. "The board and members are open to evaluation, research, getting feedback from members, putting it into action."

Only one practitioner--a communication manager for a media and technology company--explicitly pointed out the connection between public relations evaluation and organizational goal achievement:

> One way that we measure [public relations goals and objectives] is that performance plans are supposed to be linked back to goals for the organization. We haven't done a good job of communicating the vision of the company, so people have a hard time seeing the link.

When the CEOs and other managers were asked about measures of effectiveness in public relations, their answers were similar to those provided by the practitioners--*successful media placement* and *desired changes in attitudes and behaviors*. And, every single top executive stressed that effective public relations successfully builds the organization's image.

Making this point, a senior vice president at a health benefits provider suggested the following indicators for evaluating public relations:

> Every opportunity that we can identify that [name of organization] should have been in external media, we were there. Every time a major issue arose that required experts in our area, we were contacted. We were known. When a significant issue arose that could have been a PR disaster, it was diffused and diffused rapidly. The marketing materials occurred in such a way that nothing was disruptive; the proper message was out; it was timely. Supporting materials had the look, the feel; there was synergy.

Similarly, a president of a state university said there is "one way" to measure the effectiveness of public relations--"the success of the organization in having stories about the organization in the media, the frequency and quality of communication with the public, the attitude of alumni, parents, and students about the institution." He

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also mentioned growth in private giving as an organizational goal related to successful public relations.

Some of the executives also related public relations evaluation to performance indicators for the organization. A market analyst for a passenger railroad was very clear about the ultimate measure of effective communication: "In terms of our performance, [we ask], 'Do our revenues go up?.' If we are really a good, competitive form of transportation and that word is out, then we should be able to make a little more money."

When probed about whether others in the organization understand the link between effective public relations and increased revenue, he said that the connection has become clear only within the last six months: "Before that, it (public relations) was pretty much isolated, and when it came time to make cuts, it was the first. There wasn't the understanding."

The company's new found appreciation for public relations came from sheer "desperation," he said. "What we had done before just wasn't working." He said that a new management team with a new philosophy then was recruited: "These new individuals understand communication better--internally and externally."

Other executives recognized the connection between measures of effective public relations and organizational goal achievement but acknowledged that the link is not always explicit. For example, a CEO of a national health institute said that public relations at his organization is evaluated through physician and consumer attitude surveys. Yet, he said the line is "fuzzy" between attitude data and performance indicators such as "success with the legislature, success with getting national grants, [and] numbers of national news pieces."

A senior associate at an animal rights and conservation organization echoed this theme. She explained that at her agency, evaluating a direct marketing program is easy--just tally responses. Yet, the only concrete measure for public relations the agency uses is media placement.

"We were never able to quantify whether public relations support enhanced our direct marketing responses," she said about one membership campaign. "But, we have come to accept that it does."

This notion of accepting public relations on faith seemed to run through most of the CEOs' and other managers' responses.[5] An executive vice president of a national health association clearly believed that the awareness and trust public relations creates are directly related to his organization's ultimate measure of success--reducing disease and risk factors for disease.

He made this point with an example about women and breast cancer:

> Getting women to change their behavior is in part dependent upon our public relations image because when we go to the public, there are other messages that they are getting. Our image has to be consistent, good, [and] accurate so women will believe us and get mammograms. The public relations part of that has to do with credibility.

Discussion

This example illustrates the main point made in much of the literature about public relations evaluation: Measuring the outcomes of public relations programs provides data needed to demonstrate that public relations helps organizations and clients meet their performance goals.

However, as this study underscores, setting goals and objectives and conducting meaningful evaluation in public relations continue to be complicated tasks. Part of the problem is that public relations itself encompasses so many different activities that goals and objectives will vary, depending on organizational priorities. It goes without saying then that no single evaluation formula will be appropriate for all programs and organizations.

Yet, despite the variable responses among these practitioners and CEOs, several trends are discernible. The first is that these practitioners seem to be moving toward more systematic public relations programming. All but one practitioner said that his or her organization has written goals and objectives for public relations. It is perhaps not surprising that the one organization lacking written goals and objectives is downsizing its public relations department.

Another striking theme is the long-range plans several interviewees had for building more formal evaluation into their public relations efforts. Most often, the junior practitioners were the ones who described such schemes. So, although some of these practitioners may be overly optimistic,[6] their outlook suggests that evaluation may be becoming a more integral part of public relations programming.

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[5] Again, however, this may be a function of selection bias.

A related point is that several practitioners seemed to be educating others in the organization about measurement issues in public relations. An example is the practitioner whose CEO used to think that "a good time was had by all" is the ultimate gauge of public relations effectiveness.

Perhaps the most encouraging finding is the understanding among these practitioners and CEOs of how public relations feeds into the strategic goals of their organization. Although most of the time this connection was inferred only, obviously most interviewees do not see public relations as an isolated function. Instead, they can articulate clearly how the ultimate success of the organization is inextricably linked to effective communication. As one practitioner said, public relations is part of "every thread of the fabric" at her organization. Similarly, the president of a state university thought that public relations is no less than the university's "window" to the external world about the university's mission and progress toward that mission.

Of course, some exceptions were revealed. Several interviewees described situations where public relations continues to be devalued. One reason given was that others in the organization do not understand the function. Making this point, one of the senior executives added at the end of his interview that professional associations in public relations need to make sure business students are exposed to public relations courses in college. He mentioned that, in his own marketing curriculum, public relations was only a "very small piece."

He went on to describe what he sees as a real research opportunity for public relations practitioners:

> We are becoming more and more of an information society. Public relations [practitioners] know where information is, where it can be obtained. They can become brokers of information for organizations very easily. [There will be] more and more data and power to crunch. Proactive public relations people of the future are going to anticipate issues and convince organizations to position themselves and have the right numbers [to do so].

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[6] And, this question may have produced some normative responses. Knowing that the study was about evaluation, practitioners inadvertently could have exaggerated their plans. However, most gave rather detailed descriptions of efforts already underway.

Demonstrating Effectiveness

Other interviewees expressed frustration that the effects of public relations are hard to isolate and too long term to connect back to practitioners' efforts. As one executive mentioned, coming up with "value-proofs" for public relations programs is very difficult. And, one practitioner argued that even if you could, people's perceptions can change overnight.

Practitioners working in public affairs and development were the only ones who seem to think public relations evaluation is direct. Their measures are strictly behavioral: Did the legislation go our way? Did donations increase? Of course, such ease in evaluation is double edged. Failure can be measured as effortlessly as success.

Not surprisingly, many interviewees said that public relations evaluation continues to be hampered by strained resources. Given this recurring theme, it is distressing that not one practitioner mentioned turning to public relations academicians for research help. Obviously, more collaboration between practitioners and academicians would be mutually beneficial.[7]

Despite constraints, though, almost all of the practitioners are doing some sort of evaluation. They mentioned virtually all of the different types of evaluation that had been identified in earlier research.

Many of these practitioners still rely heavily on informal methods such as gathering feedback from audiences. And, several feel that assessing media placement remains a valuable indication of public relations success. A couple of the CEOs certainly seem fixated on media exposure.

Other interviewees thought this approach is anachronistic. These practitioners are using or moving toward more sophisticated evaluation methods. Several described plans for gathering benchmark survey data that they hope is the first step toward systematic, on-going research.

Only two practitioners described evaluation scenarios that seem pretty close to ideal. One mentioned that, at her organization, public relations research is conducted both to plan and evaluate. The information gleaned from evaluation then is fed back into planning. Another practitioner said that, because clients demand accountability, formal research is built into every one of the agency's programs. However, not even these two practitioners described measuring any relationship indicators.

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[7] A related issue is that few mentioned exploiting the availability of secondary research, which is often inexpensive or free. Perhaps more emphasis should be given in research methods courses on finding and using this kind of information.

Another point is that all of the evaluation schemes mentioned by practitioners and top executives seem characteristic of an asymmetrical model of public relations (see J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). No one offered any examples of measuring management's position or monitoring the organization's responsiveness to publics. Although some mentioned getting "feedback," doing so involved gleaning information from publics alone.

And last, no one described experimental research designs whereby a strong case could be made for causal inferences between public relations activities and specific outcomes. Most often the link just was assumed.

In many organizations, though, this understanding may be what is needed. Almost all the interviewees--either implicitly or explicitly--stressed that effectiveness in public relations has more to do with demonstrating value than documenting communication effects per se. Fortunately, demonstrating value may be easier to do (L. Grunig, Dozier, & J. Grunig, 1994; Hon, 1997). Goals, objectives, and evaluation can provide part of the answer. The task that lies ahead is finding ways to capture the rest.

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Wired to the World:

A Preliminary Study of News Release Wire Services As Conduits for International Communication

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Wired to the World: A Preliminary Study of News Release Wire Services As Conduits for International Communication

International public relations has been identified as a primary resource need for multinational corporations to compete effectively in a global market into the 21st century (Paine, 1994). In fact, Kruckeberg (1995-96) calls the upcoming millennium, "the century of public relations" (p. 37). This in part results from increased international competition and the pervasiveness of mass communication technology. As domestic markets growth rates stabilize or shrink, many companies look beyond their borders for new customers and new opportunities (Silpacham, 1996). Additionally, "[t]echnology has changed our ability to communicate instantly around the world" (Howard, 1994, p. 38), making it critical for public relations practitioners to be able to access international media outlets and other publics when and if it determines to present a worldwide image.

The purpose of this paper is to examine one particular media access vehicle — the news release wire service — to determine its potential to provide United States organizations with admittance to worlds beyond its own borders. The preliminary study focuses on two leading providers — PR Newswire, an internationally owned company located in New York; and BusinessWire, a privately held company based in California. This first-stage assessment revealed that these providers may be useful conduit to international media, but additional services including media tracking/clipping services, are needed to determine the effectiveness of employing news release wire services. Additional study is needed into the use of news release wire services via case study analysis and elaborated content analysis. Initially, it is important to discuss the role of public relations in international communication and media relations.

Background

According to public relations guru James E. Grunig and colleagues (Dozier et al, 1996), excellence in public relations is typified by two-way symmetrical relationships, where dialog between a company and its publics (e.g., customers, employees, communities, governments, suppliers — and media) reigns. This is seen as particularly critical in the international arena, where an organization's ideals and beliefs may be challenged more readily than in its home country (Kruckeberg, 1995). "Public relations practitioners . . . will be called upon to be corporate — that is, organizational — interpreters, ethicists, and social policy-makers, charged with guiding organizational behavior as well as influencing and reconciling public perceptions within a global context" (p. 37).

However, several researchers (Burk, 1994; Cushman, 1995; Kruckeberg, 1995) indicate that multicultural and international communications are not practiced effectively in the states. In fact, concerns have been raised as to whether U.S. practitioners are adequately equipped to work internationally. "[T]here are questions as to the general preparedness of U.S. professionals to negotiate the business, social, cultural, economic, and political complexities inherent in international public relations" (Fitzpatrick and Whillock, 1993, p. 315). Burk (1994) adds, "Even as U.S. companies try to shift to an international focus they are finding their PR staffs ill-equipped" (p. 42). These practitioners face cultural differences beyond the American borders. As Silpacharn (1996) explains, "Not only does the same work take on different meanings in different countries, but also what is considered the norm in one place can be insulting, weird or even taboo in another" (p. 6).

Among the many considerations for public relations practitioners to be effective in the international arena are four distinct areas: (1) cultural sensitivity, (2) possible ethical

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differences, (3) technological adeptness, and (4) understanding the international media. It is important to further investigate these four areas:

Cultural Sensitivity: To become better equipped, practitioners need to be more culturally astute. Burk (1994) points out that, "International PR practitioners must be sensitive to culture and skilled in intercultural communication to have the greatest chance for success" (p. 41). Van Leuven and Pratt (1996) suggest that public relations should "reflect the sociopolitical environment in which it is practiced" (p. 102). Wakefield (1996) as well as Condon and Yousef (1983) point to the incongruous philosophies of American individualism and other cultures' focus on interdependence. Vercic et al (1996) point to sweeping considerations that public relations practitioners must take:

> The increased mobility of many peoples, shifting patterns of immigration within individual societies, globalization of the economy, and increasingly sophisticated communication technologies all challenge professionals in public relations to communication with culturally diverse publics (p. 47).

Although Americans value the individual and business self-interest, "by contrast, cultural values prevalent in most of Asia, Latin America and Europe place high priority on community and social relationships" (Wakefield, 1996, p. 23). Too much focus on American ideals can hamper U.S. companies' effectiveness in succeeding in a global economy. "To compete, American organizations must embrace what is intrinsic to holistic and commercial societies — the human connectedness that increasingly drives global economic activities" (p. 23). Vercic et al (1996) point to the need for practitioners to recognize their own culture and cultural biases. "Understanding one's own culture may be as critical to effective public relations as understanding the key cultural variables that affect others' communication behavior.. . . We must come to realize that we are influenced not only by our experience but by our culture as well" (p. 51).

In response to the vast array of cultural diversity issues, many multinational corporations, as well as the public relations agencies serving them, are instituting expansive employee training programs to build international teams with cross-cultural sensitivity

(Bovet, 1994b). They also are hiring more diverse talent, particularly those with foreign language skills and international travel experience.

Possible Ethical Differences: Differences in cultural practices and expectations bring to light some ethical considerations for media relations as well. Roth et al (1996) argue for a general set of broad ethical guidelines, because "[e]thical issues in the practice of public relations become increasingly complex when international borders are crossed" (p. 151).

Technological Adeptness: Today, communication throughout the world occurs instantaneously, thanks to high technology advancements in computers, satellites and fiber optics. To keep pace, it is necessary for public relations practitioners to have a high-technology aptitude to use such communication vehicles as the Internet, electronic mail and video conferencing

effectively and efficiently. In addition, practitioners should prepare for new innovations. Kruckeberg (1995) notes, "More so than many other professionals, public relations practitioners must predict and consider the impact of technologically driven changes in communication so that they can prepare themselves accordingly as professional communicators" (p. 37).

Understanding the International Media: Building relationships with domestic media is challenging enough. However, that challenge is exacerbated when public relations practitioners move beyond the United States and face the formidable task of developing media relationships in different cultures.

International media have a dual role in public relations activities. First, they are a vital public with which organizations should communicate their messages. Second, they are key communication mechanisms to reach other international publics efficiently. Newspapers, television and radio play a role in countries where an organization may have key customer bases, investors, suppliers, sales offices or manufacturing facilities. Agendas can be built internationally through the media[1], in much the same way it is done in the states. Turk (1986) notes that agenda building can be very important for organizations wanting to utilize the media in their quest to influence target publics. This source-media interaction is "a give-and-take process in which sources seek to get their information published and the press seeks to get that information from independent sources" (Ohl et al, 1995, p. 91). Since all media are unable to witness and directly report all news first hand, those sources who make information available to the media quickly and inexpensively are more likely to have their messages received by the media and used in media content. Gandy (1982) coined the term information subsidy to identify the methods used to reach the media.[2] One effective subsidy is the news release — it is succinct, mass-produced and provides the vital few facts for easy use by the media. "The press release is one of the most important and ubiquitous public relations tools. It is also one of the oldest" (Walters and Walters, 1992, p. 31), dating back to the early 1900s.

Those who employ information subsidies such as the news release should have a clear understanding of the media's requirements, whether the media are within or outside the United States. This means practitioners must use proper style, identify and meet deadlines, and follow accepted definitions of news and news values (Adams, 1994; Baskin and Aronoff, 1988; Newsom, Scott and Turk, 1993). There is a general consensus of the definition of news values in academic texts for the study of public relations and news writing, including prominence, timeliness, proximity, impact, magnitude and conflict (McAdams and Elliott, 1996), and those who work with the international media indicate that news values typically are the same the world over (Hershberg, Llarena, personal communications, 1996). A lack of training in news values and media relations can make it more difficult to establish relationships with the media, "some of whom say they cannot trust the accuracy of news releases from certain sources" (Van Leuven and Pratt, 1996, p.112).

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[1] It is important to note that the media are not the only valid communication vehicles used to reach a wide audience base. Strategically, many companies incorporate a balance of tools to ensure optimum reach of all relevant publics.

[2] Turk (1986) notes that subsidies may be written (e.g., news releases) and personalized (e.g., telephone calls, press conferences); proactive (sending information to the media) and reactive (responding to media calls). Although all these methods have their place in worldwide media relations, this paper will focus on the news release subsidy.

In addition, public relations practitioners must have a thorough understanding of how the media operate in different countries — their roles, responsibilities and expectations — and follow these structures. Many examples of media differences can be cited; a few examples follow: In many non-Democratic areas such as China and Southeast Asia, for example, media are government-controlled and often serve as the mouthpiece of ruling factions, thus affecting coverage and credibility. In other areas, the media may not be as advanced as in the U.S., both philosophically and technologically (Chen, 1996). In contrast, the Japanese mass media are more pervasive and have a high degree of credibility with their citizenry. Media relationships there are forged through a structured and tradition-based press club system, where relationship-building is critical (Cooper-Chen, 1996). Zaharna (1995) notes distinct cultural differences between Arab nations and America, and points to a need for U.S. practitioners to understand language usage in both oral and written communication. And, Strenski (1996) notes that, in South America, "Many journalists work for more than one media outlet and travel often" (p. 27), which can create unique challenges for public relations practitioners. Also, Wiesendanger (1994) notes that the media in Mexico "are not as specialized as those in the U.S. so they cannot be expected to have a deep knowledge of a particular industry" (p. 12), and therefore may need additional background information. She further indicates that a long-standing practice of "pay for play" (p. 12) that calls for bribes to be paid to ensure good coverage, is starting to fade in this country.

But building relationships with new communities and international media outlets can be a time- and money-consuming process. Establishing relationships with any media takes time — learning methods, finding and keeping the right contacts, cultivating relationships, translating materials into appropriate foreign languages, distributing releases throughout the world, and so on. As Strenski (1996) explains, "Public relations practitioners who want to reach journalists often need to spend considerable time tracking them down and analyzing their publications' structure" (p. 27) As a result, many companies subsidize their efforts with the ready-made assistance of news release wire services which have made investments to cultivate and maintain long-term relationships with the world's media outlets and profess to have a keen understanding of media needs, country-by-country. The structure and services of two leading news release wire services are detailed in the following section.

Examining News Release Wire Services

General wire services (e.g. AP, Reuters, etc.) are well-established news sources for the media worldwide. Ojala (1988) calls wire services "the raw material of newspapers" (p. 75). In the last several decades, specialized wire services have evolved to address niche requirements — business, finance and entertainment, for example. News release wire services emerged about 40 years ago as an optional means of distributing company news rapidly to a wide array of media. PR Newswire, based in New York City, takes credit for initiating this type of service (PR Newswire, 1995), and was followed closely by competitor BusinessWire a few years later (Llarena, personal communication).

Although international distribution comprises a small percentage of these release wire services' business — PR Newswire, about 10 percent; BusinessWire, about 20 percent (Hershberg, Llarena, 1996) — this is considered a growing market. Neil Hershberg, director of media relations for PR Newswire, says, "We've seen a steady rise [in international release distribution] over the last five years. Everybody is trying to get a toehold across borders" (personal communication, 1996). Barbara Llarena, account executive for BusinessWire, explains that many clients who use their service domestically are adding international distribution "when they enter a new market or build a plant internationally" (personal communications, 1996).

Affiliate wire services are open to receiving news releases via wire, according to these release wire service spokespersons. Hershberg says, "It's a new source of revenue for news agencies. They're willing to accept commercial traffic, and they're interested in getting this information." In turn, print and broadcast subscribers are "receptive to the news releases, contingent upon their legitimate news value" (personal communication). The representatives from both services said they have found that news values are defined the same the world over. In addition to timeliness, proximity is crucial for international media to consider using releases. Hershberg explains, "The bottom line is local relevancy" (personal communication). This can include localized information on contracts, key sales, distribution agreements, purchases, acquisitions, franchise agreements, construction of new facilities, litigation, personnel and financing.[3]

The main selling points touted by both companies are speed, reach, up-to-date media lists and translation services. "We're able to get information to the media in a time-efficient manner; it goes directly to the media's computers," explains Llarena. "They [clients] don't have to maintain or update media lists" (personal communication). Hershberg concurs, adding, "Many people are hard-pressed to identify all the appropriate media, translate the release and deal with distribution of time-sensitive information" (personal communication).

News release wire services operate in the same manner as their general wire service counterparts, directly transmitting information electronically to media outlet subscribers. Additionally, news release services have fostered affiliate relationships with many general wire services worldwide (e.g., Reuters, Agence France-Presse, Xinhua English Language News Service). These affiliates receive the releases electronically from the news release wire service provider, and prepare them for transmission to their media subscribers for use as their journalists see fit in the mass media. Release wire service providers say the use of

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[3] This is by no means an exhaustive list, but is representative of what has been distributed by these news release wire services in the past 10 months.

well-respected wire services adds both reach and credibility with media worldwide (Hershberg, Llarena, 1996).

The distribution process is similar for both providers. First, a client defines the appropriate distribution of the news release. Providers offer a number of international (as well as domestic) distribution lists. Second, the client identifies the timing for release distribution. This is particularly important for time-sensitive information. Third, the client provides a news release to the provider via modem, fax or email. The providers say they prefer electronic transfer of the release because it reduces the amount of preparation for distribution. Once the provider has received this direction from the client, the release is formatted into wire service style, coded for identification and distributed electronically, both directly to media subscribers as well as to affiliated international wire services for distribution to their subscribers. Clients are notified of the release time.

As an added service, the provider typically will repeat a transmission to an editor or analyst if the recipient cannot locate the release that was sent. Headline summaries are transmitted electronically throughout the day to provide short synopses of the releases available to editors.

In addition to media distribution, the service providers often archive the releases in databases for public consumption, based on client request, to permit access by investment professionals, investors, researchers, industry experts, editors, and other interested parties (BusinessWire web site, 1996). Ojala (1988) explains the value of newswire databases as "increasingly important to business research, particularly when competitive intelligence is involved. Having the most current, even immediate, information is a critical component of competitive intelligence systems" (p.75).

These databases include Nexis, Dialog, NewsNet, Vu/Text, Industry ASAP and NewsWire ASAP (Ojala, 1988), as well as release distribution provider web sites. Most databases are updated at least daily; some more often, according to Ojala (1988). The release time is noted on the electronic version in databases. Both PR Newswire and

BusinessWire place news releases on their web sites for cost-free admittance by anyone with Web access, including the media. All releases of the previous 48 hours (international releases are not kept separate from domestic releases) are cited by headline. A search engine permits access to other releases in the providers' respective Web data bases by key words. And, both services provide hypertext links to the publicized company's web site through the provider web site (BusinessWire web site, 1996; PR Newswire web site, 1996).

Although there appears at first blush to be few shortcomings of these services, there are disadvantages and omissions that must be evaluated. First, neither provider offers tracking services for its clients to identify which media uses news releases; both recommend clients contract clipping services for this. PR Newswire occasionally monitors the financial wires such as Dow Jones and Reuters for its own assessment, and Hershberg alluded to anecdotal evidence from clients. However, no research data was available from the providers at the time of this study to assess the effectiveness of their international services quantitatively. This alone raises concerns about the usefulness of undocumented services.

Second, it is important to consider that these providers are merely conduits — they do not draft releases or consult on content. These processes must be performed by the client or another outside source prior to distribution. Likewise, it is the client who defines the media to receive the release. Both services indicated they may advise a client of the availability of international media lists and make recommendations. Hershberg (personal communication) notes, however, "We're a proprietary news service. They [clients] decide who to send their release to."

Third, as a conduit, the news release wire services have no more control over what gets picked up by the affiliates and international media than any client sending a release directly to the media. The gatekeeping process of the media is not eliminated with the use of a specialized service; the media still determine what will be run, when and where. This control of news flow may be highly restrictive in non-democratic countries. For example, according to Chinese law, its official news agency, Xinhua, must approve all economic information supplied by foreign news agencies to be published in China. Further, any foreign news agency must pay a fee to Xinhua for this privilege. Authorities threaten to take action against news agencies that defy these regulations (J. Moon mail, 1996). Further research is needed to determine what effects these and similar policies of non-democratic governments have on news release wire services; however, this will not be addressed in this paper.

Despite these fallacies, both services appear to be prosperous. The following sections take a closer look at PR Newswire and BusinessWire, their structures and services.

PR Newswire

PR Newswire Association Inc., founded in 1954, advertises itself as the originator of this type of specialized wire service and as "the world's leader in the electronic distribution of full text corporate, association, and institutional news releases to the media and financial community" (PR Newswire, p. 2). Its services are cited to include: (1) domestic[4] and international distribution of releases, (2) distribution of releases to trade publications, financial companies and analysts, (3) fax distribution to client-targeted lists and fax-on-demand, (4) placement of releases in more than 100 domestic and international databases, (5) disclosure network for Securities and Exchange Commission and industrial regulations, (6) Industry-specific lists, and (7) mail distribution.

Headquartered in New York City, the $7 million operating revenue company employs about 225 people in 22 domestic locations. They do not have any international offices; however, the company is a private subsidiary of a London-based media corporation, United News and Media, which recently merged with Great Britain's MAI to form the seventh largest media company in the United Kingdom (Teather, 1996)[5].

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[4] PR Newswire states that it reaches more than 2,000 newspapers, wires services, magazines and broadcast outlets domestically (PR Newswire, 1995).

However, it appears that PR Newswire does not openly leverage its international parentage. PR Newswire's ownership by United News and Media (formerly United Newspapers plc)[6] is glossed over in the United States.[7] Hershberg admits the parent company opens resources to PR Newswire, but "we don't ask for their intervention or assistance" in accessing international media outlets (personal communications, 1996).

There has been no indication what effect, if any, the British-based merger of United News and Media and MAI may have on PR Newswire. The integrated media entity combines the newspaper-focused United — owner of Britain's Daily Express, Sunday Express, the Star and several flourishing regional newspapers — and broadcast-centered MAI, which owns Meridian, Anglia and Channel 5, satellite and cable interests, as well as a number of brokerage companies.[8] PR Newswire is in the business division with fellow U.S. company Miller Freeman, a magazine publisher and trade show organizer, as well as with MAI's financial and securities companies. A consumer division manages the TV interests and national and regional papers (Beale, 1996; Investor's Chronicle, 1995; Reguly, 1996).

The leadership of the U.S.-based PR Newswire has an international flair. President and Chief Executive Officer Ian Capps joined PR Newswire in 1988 as senior vice president of operations. Formally schooled at Oxford, he learned the ins and outs of the wire service business firsthand during 17 years with Reuters worldwide news and information agency, working in editorial, sales and management. Prior to joining PR

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[5] According to Datastream, the new company falls behind Reuters holdings, Thorn EMI, BSkyB, Reed International, Granada Group, and Pearson, but is ahead of Carlton Communications, News International and Daily Mail & General Trust (Teather, 1996).

[6] In many newspaper and magazine articles, the two company names are used interchangeably. A symbolic name change from United Newspapers plc to United News and Media occurred in March 1995, and was designed "to reflect both the breadth and the growing international nature of the interests of United..." (Snoddy, 1995a, p. 25).

[7] There is one sentence within the PR Newswire website (1996) that states that PR Newswire is one division of United News and Media.

[8] The multimedia merger results in one company holding 13 percent of Britain's national daily press and nine percent of the Sunday press readership, as well as reaching nine million viewers through its television interests. It will have a market value of 2.9 billion pounds (Reguly, 1996; Teather, 1996).

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Newswire, Capps headed U.S. and European operations of Business International Corporation, which provides economic analysis and advisory services to multinational corporations (Capps, 1993). This leadership provides a triple threat — media savvy, wire service competence and multinational business sense — that may give PR Newswire a whispered edge over its competition.

To reach some 3,000 international media outlets, PR Newswire relies on about two dozen international wire service affiliates — including better known agencies such as Agence France-Presse, Reuters, ITAR-Tass (Eastern Europe), Xinhua (China) and Canada NewsWire[9] — to reach the general and trade media (print and broadcast) throughout the world (PR Newswire web site, 1996). Photographs can be digitally transmitted by satellite through the affiliate links as well (PR Newswire, 1996). In addition to individual country distribution, PR Newswire also offers special regional packages, such as print and broadcast media in Western Europe, Scandinavia, Pan-Asia, the Caribbean and Central America, to name a few (PR Newswire, 1995).

The international media are not the only outlets receiving the news releases. For example, Canada NewsWire distribution also includes brokerage firms, regional stock exchanges and the securities commission; ITAR-Tass distributes to government ministries and research institutes of the former Soviet Union (PR Newswire web site, 1996). To meet disclosure requirements for publicly-traded companies, the service provider also will distribute releases to major stock exchanges, brokerage houses and banks in Europe and Asia (PR Newswire, 1995).

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[9] Other affiliates include Two-Ten Communications (Great Britain), Deutsche Press Agentur (Germany), Press Association (U.K.), SDA/ATS (Switzerland), Europa Press Agency (Spain), Austria Press Agentur, Agence Belga (Belgium), Middle East News Agency, Itim (Israel), South African Press Association, and News Agency of Nigeria. In addition, PR Newswire utilizes AsiaNet based in Sydney, Australia, to link to media in 22 Asian countries and the Pacific Islands, through news agency circuits with Xinhua, KK Kyodo's Japan Business News Center, Australian Associated Press, Press Trust of India, Antara (Indonesia), Bernama (Malaysia and Singapore), New Zealand Press, United News of Bangladesh and Vietnam News Agency (PR Newswire, 1995). Additionally, it is important to note that PR Newswire is part-owner of Canada NewsWire (Hershberg, 1996; PR Newswire website, 1996).

The price estimates provided by PR Newswire are based on 300-word length releases, with increases by 50-word increments. List packages used and distribution location also affect cost; translation costs are separate.

BusinessWire

Unlike PR Newswire, which is part of an international conglomerate, BusinessWire is a private company, with headquarters in San Francisco, California. It is the second largest news release wire service, behind PR Newswire, but company President Larry I. Lokey, 68, has said he is formulating strategies to surpass the leader before the turn of the century (Fraser, 1995). Comparable in size to its leading competitor, BusinessWire employs about 200 people in 17 U.S. offices. In 1994, they transmitted 74,800 news releases and posted $28 million in revenues. The company promotes its 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week capabilities as a plus for international interests (Business ASAP, 1996; BusinessWire web site, 1996).

With printer's ink in his veins, Lokey brings media savvy and wire service expertise to his organization, based on journalistic endeavors prior to starting a one-man news release wire service operation 36 years ago. He worked with the General Electric western news bureau and as a correspondent for "The Stars and Stripes" newspaper of the U.S. military. Although known for being fiscally frugal, Lokey provides his employees with attractive benefits including a pension trust and a profit-sharing savings trust. The economic stability for employees pays for itself, he says, through employee retention and the cost-effectiveness of cost-controls and tax deductions (Fraser, 1995).

When Lokey founded the company in 1961, its focus was on America's west coast, virtually ignored at that time by PR Newswire, in the unchallenged area between Los Angeles and Seattle. Its expansion eastward grew substantially in the early 1980s when offices opened in New York and Boston. The company has distributed releases internationally since its inception, a market segment that has seen increased growth in the last several years (Fraser, 1995; Llarena, 1996).

BusinessWire also has wire service affiliates, including Reuters and Universal News Services, as well as direct media contacts around the globe. Its international circuits include Asia/Far East, Asia/Middle East, Australia and New Zealand, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Canada and Latin America. Individual country distribution is also available. An alliance with NEWSdesk permits the provider to transmit releases, pictures and graphics worldwide via the Internet (BusinessWire web site, 1996).

BusinessWire differs distinctively from PR Newswire in two key areas: managing an international office and offering a international high-technology circuit. Unlike PR Newswire, which only has domestic offices, BusinessWire maintains an office in Paris, France, to manage European distribution. They also employ an international media specialist to cultivate and maintain relationships with media worldwide. Additionally, through an alliance with IDG International Publishing Services, BusinessWire has established wire service circuits to reach 228 high technology publications in 65 countries in Europe and the Far East, as well as North America (BusinessWire web site, 1996; Llarena, personal communication, 1996).

The prices for international distribution are based on 300-word releases, with additional costs in 100-word increments (BusinessWire web site, 1996). Although the prices appear to be less than those charged by PR Newswire, it is difficult to determine if a common, apples-to-apples comparison is being made because of the different distribution structures of the two companies.

This section has established that both PR Newswire and BusinessWire have the capabilities to distribute information to media outlets worldwide. In the next section, an assessment will be made of these services through a database search and evaluation.

Assessing News Release Wire Services

As stated earlier, neither BusinessWire nor PR Newswire provides a formalized tracking or clipping service for members who use international or domestic distribution services. Hence, evaluating the effectiveness and usefulness of the service was somewhat hampered. Although both companies house releases in databases such as Nexis, a simple count of the number of releases distributed via these wire services does not account for their usage by various worldwide media. Release pick-up rates will vary depending on the media outlet's assessment of the usefulness of a news release as an information subsidy.

Hence, thorough research of the effectiveness of utilizing news release wire services should be addressed in two distinct stages that can evaluate source and recipient roles. First, it is important to determine if wire affiliates and individual media outlets are using the release wire services. One method to employ is analyzing media content to determine information sources. Second, it is important to identify the effectiveness of the service for its clients; that is, address key evaluation questions such as: what percent of the release copy was used; what was the time lapse between distribution and publication; where was the release placed in the publication; was the purpose of the communiqué fulfilled; to name a few. This requires in-depth analysis with specific wire service clients. As a preliminary study, his paper addresses the first stage only.

For the stage one analysis, two hypotheses were developed:

Hypothesis #1: The wire service affiliates will be more likely than individual media to cite PR Newswire or BusinessWire as the source of the electronically distributed information. This is expected because of the affiliate relationships developed by the service providers.

Hypothesis #2: As the recognized leader in news release wire services, PR Newswire is expected to be cited as source more often than BusinessWire.

Method

To conduct stage one of this study, it is necessary to identify the source of the releases in two distinct levels: (1) Identify which international wire service affiliates accepted and distributed the news releases with the provider cited as source, and (2) Identify what international print media outlets used the releases and cited one of the providers as source. For the purpose of this exploratory study, only print media and services were used.

To simplify access to international print media, the search was conducted using Nexis news databases. An assessment of English-language, non-United States print media[10] was made via the Nexis database service for the period of January 1, 1996 through October 31, 1996. This time period was selected for its timeliness and to determine the current usage of the wire services by international media. The search was constructed to make every effort to identify PR Newswire or BusinessWire as the source of news releases. Hence, in the course of the search, the company names "PR Newswire" and "BusinessWire" were sought for citations within the "Source" field, within the "Byline" field, or within the body text of an item, as categorized by Nexis.

Results

The types of citations fell into three distinct categories:

(1) Source: PR Newswire or BusinessWire cited as the source, either within the text of the item (e.g., "in its press release transmitted by PR Newswire," or ". . . according to BusinessWire") or in the "Source" field of an item.

(2) Additional information: A closing notation within the text of a release, or as an editor's note, that further information is available from or through one of the news release wire services (e.g., additional releases or information on a particular company are available

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[10] English-language print media were selected because of this researcher's limited foreign language skills. However, it is also important to note that a cursory viewing of non-English language news outlets outside of the United States did not reveal citations of news release wire services within the defined timeframe.

from PR Newswire's or BusinessWire's web site, through fax-on-demand or by calling the provider using a conventional telephone number).

(3) Topic: Articles about PR Newswire and BusinessWire — but not produced and provided by PR Newswire or BusinessWire — and the services they provide, or articles that reference the providers' services more discretely. Any item about one of these service providers that also cited the provider as the source would be recorded as a "Source" citation (Category 1).

The search of English-language, non-U.S. news vehicles produced 174 citations for PR Newswire and 17 for BusinessWire during the defined time period. The majority of citations for both services were from affiliated wire services. For BusinessWire, the identified vehicles were three wire services — Reuters Financial Service, Reuters Business Report, Universal News Services — and one news outlet, Budapest Business Journal. PR Newswire was referenced by eight affiliated wire services — Canada NewsWire, Reuters Financial Service, AFX News (Agence France-Presse), Universal News Services, Reuters World Service, Reuter Asia-Pacific Business Report, Reuter Business Report and Times Newspaper Ltd. — as well as two direct media outlets — the International Herald Tribune and Budapest Business Journal.

Over 90 percent of the citations fell within the Category 2 ("additional information"), and were found in releases transmitted over affiliated wire services. Only five items fell in Category 1, citing a service provider within the story text as the source of the information (in both instances, the provider was PR Newswire). It was not possible to determine, however, whether the information in the story had been transmitted directly to the media outlet by PR Newswire or through an affiliated wire service, and was simply not cited as such[11]. An additional 10 items discussed the service providers themselves

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[11] It is precisely for this reason that the second stage of the study is required. In stage two, one or more clients of each release wire service would be asked to provide such information as the text of news releases, purpose, release date, and distribution list. Then, it would be possible to track the actual release to determine if and when it is used by the targeted media.

(Category 3) — six addressed the United News and Media/MAI merger, and four referenced services offered through one or both providers.

A separate, secondary assessment was made of smaller English-language media databases on Nexis — the Asia/Pacific Rim general and business media database, and the Europe/current news database, both during the same 10-month period of the larger data set. In the Asia/Pacific Rim database, PR Newswire received nine citations in Reuter Asia-Pacific Business Report, Reuters World Service, the Bangkok Post (via Reuter Textline) and the Business Times of Malaysia. Three citations fell in Category 1, with PR Newswire cited as information source within the story text; three were Category 2 "additional information" citations; and three were Category 3 "topic" articles with information on the provider's services.

BusinessWire appeared once in the Asia/Pacific Rim database search, in the Bangkok Post via Reuters Textline. The citation was a Category 3 "topic" article on its services. In this abbreviated search, it was possible to identify one media outlet (the Bangkok Post) which cited in the header that information was provided via Reuter Textline wire service.

The assessment of English-language European news outlets produced 63 PR Newswire citations and three BusinessWire citations. The PR Newswire cites appeared in Reuter Textline, Agence France-Presse, Reuter European Business Rep, Universal News Service, Centaur Communications Ltd., ABI/Inform, Times Newspaper Ltd., as well as in the International Herald Tribune, Financial Times and Budapest Business Journal. Twenty-three items were Category 1 citations, with PR Newswire cited twice as the source of the information within the body text, and an additional 21 wire service citations listed PR Newswire in the "Source" field, separate from the release text. Four citations were Category 3, "topic" items, where PR Newswire services were discussed. The remainder were Category 2, "additional information" items.

The BusinessWire citations appeared in Centaur Communication, Budapest Business Journal, and an international edition of the New York Times. One of the three BusinessWire citations included the provider as information source (Category 1), and two identified BusinessWire as a provider of additional information (Category 2). There were no citations for BusinessWire in Category 3.

Discussion

Both hypotheses were supported. The analysis revealed that the majority of citations in the Nexis databases were by wire services affiliated with PR Newswire and BusinessWire. Additionally, PR Newswire received more citations than BusinessWire. However, these results alone do not affirm or discredit either service as a viable outlet to the international media. Most often, the media did not indicate if the information was made available through a company release or via a news release wire service. Therefore, a company release distributed by PR Newswire or BusinessWire could have been used by media outlets without citing the providers as sources of the information. Hence, stage two of the research is required; a clipping service or some formalized tracking method is warranted to identify which of the targeted media outlets used a release, how the release was used (i.e., in its entirety, shortened or edited, or as part of a related story), the time delay between the release distribution and media usage, etc.

Future research is essential to address these discrepancies. In stage two, it would be of value to trace the life of a pre-selected company's news releases from distribution by a news release wire service to its ultimate appearance in an international media outlet. This would require identification of the company's targeted international media list, release dates and times, news release wire service used, and release text, for effective analysis.

Conclusion

News release wire services can reach international media, but it is difficult to assess the usage of news releases by the media without adequate tracking systems. Both leading providers — PR Newswire and BusinessWire — have established relationships with international media directly and through general wire service affiliates, and have the resources to maintain accurate, up-to-date distribution lists. Both providers offer translation services and can distribute time-sensitive information expeditiously — directly to news rooms, through wire services or via the Internet or fax.

However, companies considering contracting with news release wire services must remember that the provider is only a convenient conduit to the international media. Developing acceptable releases and tracking/clipping services must be handled separately to document international media usage of news releases.

Additional research into these specialized wires services is critical in enabling a complete assessment of services. The next steps of research need to include case study evaluation of users, including the company's strategies for using the service, budget and specific tactics. Additional, indepth content analysis of specific news vehicles would also complement this research.

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Fourth Generation Evaluation: Implications for Public Relations Education

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Fourth Generation Evaluation: Implications for Public Relations Education

Abstract

The topic of evaluating student learning outcomes continues to receive attention from public relations educators Although quantitative approaches are still widely used, what has not been addressed is an effective way of qualitatively assessing the achievement of instructional objectives, student attitudes about course content and teaching effectiveness This paper discusses results of a study which tests the use of a fourth generation evaluation method used during a semester length course entitled "Multicultural Communications" and suggests implications for public relations educators

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

Introduction

For many years quantitative methods have been the mainstay of evaluation by academicians and training professionals. Even today, both groups continue to use quantitative techniques to assess the achievement of instructional objectives, student attitudes about course content, and teaching effectiveness. Noted instructional design and evaluation scholars such as Briggs and Wager (1980), Dick and Carey (1985), Gangue, Briggs and Wager (1988) and Guba and Lincoln (1989) support the use of quantitative as well as qualitative approaches however quantitative methods remain the preferred choice. The reluctance of the academy and the profession to adopt qualitative evaluation methods has resulted in the lost of a plethora valuable information which could prove useful to educators and students.

In 1993, a study was conducted to investigate the feasibility of using fourth generation evaluation during the process of instruction. A semester length course entitled "Multicultural Communications (PUR 5406/PUR 4934)," designed in response to the need for communications profession, specifically public relations to produce well-trained culturally sensitive practitioners for the workforce and the market place. A revised pause model consisting of three one-on-one in-depth interviews conducted outside of the class, three reflections periods during the class and a self-reflective essay prepared one week before the end of the course was analyzed. Narrative and graphic summaries of participant responses produced significant results, however only the narrative results are discussed.

The revised pause model was found to be an effective evaluation method for use during

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

multicultural education in public relations under certain conditions as perceived by the participants in the study. Participant self-perceived behavior change and knowledge acquisition was identified through use of the revised pause model. Study results suggest that by using the revised pause model of evaluation, instructors teaching multicultural education, i.e. public relations courses in schools of journalism and mass communication is yet another way of enhancing their ability to become both the researcher and the research subject. In addition, the introduction of this qualitative model was found to be a more effective way of generating participant involvement and introspection. Several implications surface from the results of this study that are particularly relevant to public relations educators.

Literature Review

Fourth generation evaluation as defined by Guba and Lincoln (1989), insists that as evaluation involves humans as clients, as stakeholders and as information sources. This process of evaluation requires the evaluator to interact with those humans in a manner respecting their dignity, integrity, and privacy. Of course conventional evaluators have been careful about ethics; rules respecting fully informed consent, harm, deception, and privacy/confidentiality are well understood and mostly practiced.

The issue here is full participative involvement which takes place when the stakeholders and others who may be drawn into the evaluation are welcomed as equal partners in every aspect of design, implementation, interpretation, and resulting action of an evaluation;

that is they are accorded a full measure of political parity and control. It means that human participants are accorded the privilege of sharing their constructions and working toward common, consensual, more fully informed and sophisticated, joint construction. They are accorded a full measure of conceptual parity. It means that the participants continue to be treated as humans, not as subjects of experimentation or objects of study. This new form of evaluation empowers, enfranchises and fuses the act of evaluation and its follow-up into one indistinguishable whole. The mode of fourth generation evaluation meets the challenge, at least to a first level of approximation.

Before this emergent new form of evaluation can be given adequate consideration it must be tested utilizing assorted subject matter and instructional design. There is an increasing need for an alternative to the quantitative paradigm. The belief exists that the quantitative paradigm has reached the limits of its effectiveness and there is a need for a more holistic approach. An emerging qualitative paradigm must be included as a legitimate alternative in evaluation if the holistic approach is to be achieved. "To approach evaluation scientifically is to miss completely its fundamental social, political, and value-oriented character" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 31).

The first three generations of evaluation processes as defined by Guba and Lincoln (1989), were indeed scientific. Collection of data from individuals was not systematically possible until the development of appropriate quantitative instruments of the sort characterized in the first generation.

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

Evaluation would have stagnated at that level had not the second generation shown the way to evaluate the many non-human evaluands (the entity to be evaluated) as well--the programs, materials, teaching strategies, organizational patterns, and treatments in general. The third generation required that evaluation lead to judgment, both about an evaluand and the method its inner or intrinsic value--and about its worth--its extrinsic or contextual value. "All three generations, as a group, have suffered and continue to suffer from certain flaws or defects sufficiently serious to warrant raising whether additional refinements--or even a complete reconstruction--may now be needed" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 31).

In 1991, Liebowitz, introduced a new form of fourth generation evaluation as a way for training and development professionals to pause in the midst of their training to critically reflect upon how their immediate actions relate to their personal and professional aspirations. The major components of the Liebowitz Pause Model (1991) are reflection periods, interviews, split sheet journals, and member checks. To capture and articulate actual learning outcomes as presented in the pause model Liebowitz (1991) used four techniques:

1. Learner self-reports, split-sheet journals, writing tasks, self reflective essay,
2. Interviews, reflective conversations between the trainer and the learners;
3. Reflection periods, open class discussions governed by reflective contracts, virtual worlds; and
4. Observations by either learners or the trainer, which are noted and discussed inform all one-to-one (not in an interview format) within two or three hours of the observation (p. 151).

Liebowitz (1991) did not actually test the model he designed. He did offer potential strategies for testing the model. The revised pause model tested in the 1993 study was developed after a comprehensive review of his strategies. A true test of the model is its usefulness to adult education and training professionals, as well as communications educators.

Usefulness as defined by Liebowitz is the model's ability to enable practitioners to deal with complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and values education and training. Although the Liebowitz pause model in its entirety is certainly useful, a revised pause model seemed more appropriate for the subject matter at hand, the participants and the time constraints of using the model during actual instruction. The revised pause model was designed to make use of those elements of qualitative research that are deemed feasible for replication by communications educators.

A complete replication of the Liebowitz pause model is perceived as time consuming and difficult studying large populations. It was determined that rather than use all of the aspects of the Liebowitz (1991) pause model the following components were selected as the major components of the revised pause model: Reflection periods, interviews and self-reflective essays are more manageable and useful for the subject matter being presented. The components were chosen because they could be used to gather a wealth of in-depth information can easily be incorporated into a course in which students are asked to participate in activities inside and outside of the classroom.

Multicultural Communications (PUR 5406/PUR 4934) - The Course. Initially begun as a graduate-level seminar and later cross listed with the undergraduate senior-level seminar, the course Multicultural Communications (PUR 5406/PUR 4934) examines the nuances of cultural characteristics and behavior that enables public relations practitioners to more effectively communicate various messages. The impact of culture on communications is also studied, as well as the ways in which perception, prejudice, myths and stereotypes shape attitudes. The course includes a series of structured exercises requiring students to form dyads and triads. At the end of each exercise and module, the larger groupreconvenes for discussion and summary.

To achieve the objective of creating practitioners trained in multicultural communications, the course was divided into three segments: Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity, South Florida: America's Boiling Pot, and Intercultural /International Communication. A host of textbooks were reviewed before one required and two recommended texts were selected. The required text is Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives, 4th Edition (1993) by Martin N. Marger. The recommended texts are Intercultural Communication: A Reader, 5th Edition (1988) by Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter, and Majority and Minority: The Dynamic of Race and Ethnicity in American Life, 4th Edition (1985) by Norman R. Yetman.

Segment One, Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity includes three training modules:

- Module I, Culture and Cultural Context, developed to help students examine cultural and interpersonal relationships as they function in the work world. Particular emphasis was placed on understanding cultural characteristics and behavior. At the end of this module, students should be able to define culture and define multiculturalism, understand culture, race, and ethnicity from different perspectives, be aware of the value of culture, recognize the negative attitudes about cultures which foster inappropriate behavior, and show and experience the commonalties of participants' different cultures. Module I also provides the students with an opportunity to experience each other's culture. Includes three structured exercises requiring students form pairs, dyads and triads: Paired Cultural Interviews and Introductions (self-identified cultural heritage); Circle of Culture (comparison of participant culture/gender to dominant culture); and, Where is this from? (culture/country artifact identification).

- Module II, Intercultural Communication, examines the impact of culture on communication. Particular emphasis is placed on presenting the impact of language, verbal and non-verbal, on intercultural interaction. At the end of this module, students should be able to define communication, intercultural communication, dialect, prejudice and perception. Students should also be able to explain the differences between perception and reality, and describe the comfort and discomfort level created among and between cultural groups when some of the students are communicating in a language they do not understand. Includes one structured exercise requiring students to form dyads to list all the words phrases or communications styles which hinder effective communication with African-Americans, Latinos, Asians and Native Americans (ALANA) group members; to identify at least three personal communication factors which obstruct effective cultural communication; to recognize that people solve problems and manifest behaviors according to cultural learning. How these behavior are exhibited (verbal/nonverbal) affects the process; and to developing strategies to overcome trigger words, phrases and actions that negatively impact our own intercultural communication and factors which may impact on intercultural communications (environment, purpose, time, interpersonal factors, personality, situational factors, communications style, language/dialect/accent, world view, filters and culture.

- Module III, Myths and Stereotypes, helps students become aware of how perceptions, prejudice, myths, and stereotypes shape attitudes and to explore participants' attitudes about African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans (ALANA). At the end of this module, students will be able to define prejudice, myths, and stereotypes. They will be able to give at least three examples of myth about ALANA group members, identify behaviors that may evoke negative stereotypes about ALANA group members, discuss at least one strategy to use in approaching someone who has accepted a negative stereotype about members of ALANA groups, identify one type of behavior that conflicts with the students' values, and identify at least two possible outcomes for persons who are stereotyped by the institutions of which they are a part. Includes one structured exercise requiring students to list and identify at least three examples of myths and stereotypes as they related to ALANA and non-ALANA group members, preparation and performance in a three minute skit in which each member must portray stereotypical behavior of a cultural group other than his/her own situations which occur in the workplace and or in everyday life. A collection of videotapes are aired during this module including, "Beyond Hate" with Bill Moyers, "The Color of Your Skin," and "Cultural Communication: A Video on Media stereotypes."

Segment two: South Florida: America's boiling pot. A cadre of culture-specific subject matter experts are invited to make presentations. Speakers are asked to cover the origin of the ethnic/cultural/racial group in South Florida and issues of concern to this group locally and nationally for about an hour, including time for questions. Identification of the communication channels appropriate in reaching these groups, issues of salience to these groups are discussed, appropriate organizations which represent these groups locally, nationally and internationally are discussed.

Segment Three: Intercultural/International communications. A series of quest speakers, assigned readings, and in-class exercises are used in this segment of the course. Representatives from corporations, agencies, and nonprofit organizations that are tasked with communicating effectively with audiences in Central and Latin America, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Japan. The speakers discuss public relations case studies conducted outside of the United States.

Assignments. The first assignment requires students to complete an annotated bibliography of readings from research journals, periodicals, and major newspapers on the topic areas discussed in class. Assignment two requires students to prepare a 20-page briefing paper on the top three issues of concern locally and nationally to the multicultural groups discussed in class. The final project asks students to develop a campaign designed to increase awareness among ALANA group members on one of four issues: organ donations, recycling, aids prevention, and U. S. immigrations policies. Students were given a choice of two other assignments. Choice Two asked students to develop a multicultural exhibit for a diverse ethnic community and Choice Three asked the students to design a week-long training session for corporate employees to increase their level of cultural awareness and sensitivity.

The Fall 1993 Study

Data Collection Methods. A pilot study was conducted during the Spring 1993 offering of Multicultural Communications. The pilot was a dress-rehearsal for a component of the revised pause model tested in the Fall 1993. The participants were interviewed between class meetings for 30 minutes or less. With the permission of the participants, all of the interviews were audio-taped. All of the participants were asked the eight questions. The coding process for this study was determined based on a set of key concepts included in multicultural education and instruction, course objectives, and intended/unintended learning outcomes. Six participants interviewed were asked predetermined questions in the same order.

Pilot study results indicated that the one-on-one in-depth interview component of the revised pause model as a qualitative method of evaluation should not be taken lightly. The results did not, suggest that the quantitative evaluation models should be abandoned. The results did however provide support for qualitative models being considered a full-fledged comprehensive alternative to quantitative

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

models When the qualitative model is used specifically in evaluating multicultural instruction utilizes the most important aspect of this type of education---critical thinking

The pilot study accomplished three objectives First, it has showed that communication educators, specifically public relations educators need to pause and critically reflect upon the relationship of their actions and aspirations during instruction Both the educators and their students can benefit from such reflection in action Second, although this pilot study tested only one component of the revised pause model that can be used when communication educators/educators can use when they do pause to critically reflect And, third this pilot study suggested a viable method for training communication students to become more culturally aware and sensitive and who can communicate effectively in our culturally diverse world The pilot study results also indicated that the course "Multicultural Communications (PUR5406/PUR 4934) created an environment which encouraged interaction between the learners and the teacher as well as with other learners Students appeared to like the diversity of working in dyads and triads in structured in-class assignments Participants welcomed the opportunity for discussion and active participation The reality based assignments were viewed by participants as an attractive aspect of the course The inclusion of guest speakers who are knowledgeable and willing to be candid in their remarks were also rated as a high point in the course

The Actual Study Multicultural Communications (PUR 5406/PUR 4934) was offered once again during the Fall 1993 semester, with the inclusion of a revised pause evaluation model A group of 22 participants registered in the Fall 1993 course. All of the students voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. At the beginning of the first class meeting each participant randomly selected a number from 1-23. Throughout the remainder of the study each participant was identified by the number selected. Each participant was interviewed twice during a ten-week period for 30-45 minutes during the instructors regularly scheduled office hours. Thirty to forty-five days following the completion of the course, participants were interviewed once again. Two female graduate students/teaching assistants not enrolled in the course coded the data. With the permission the students in the course each designation reflection period and one-on-one in-depth interview was audio-taped, transcribed and coded within 48 hours. The results from the course with inclusion of the revised pause model into the course was analyzed and summarized in tabular and narrative form, however only the narrative information is presented in this paper. The interviews were conducted by the instructór for the following reasons:

1. the revised pause model is designed to allow for the maximum interaction between the instructor and the students. It is only through instructor involvement that evaluation can be conducted during instruction;
2. the level of instructor involvement in administering the components of the model is dictated by the model itself;
3. the instructor is provided with immediate information that can be used to asses student attitudes, the achievement of instructional objectives, intended and unintended learning outcomes and teaching effectiveness, and,
4. the instructor involvement creates the opportunity for the teacher to become the researcher and the research subject.

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

To qualitatively evaluate the effectiveness of the revised pause model as well as the course itself, students were asked to participate in reflection periods after each exercise in the course All of the participants were asked to prepare self-reflective essays for submission at the end of the class Each student was interviewed two times during the course and once 30-45 days after the completion of the course The three reflection periods were audio-taped with the permission of all of the participants at the end of each module. The audio-tapes of the session were transcribed and reviewed after each class The tapes from each reflection period were transcribed and reviewed to uncover similarities, shifts in thinking or direction and to identify the use of key concepts. If at anytime there is an indication that intended learning outcomes are not being met, modifications were made to the module Additional structured exercises and readings were recommended Unintended learning outcomes were also identified.

The participants interviewed twice during the course for thirty minutes and after the completion of the course The first interview was conducted after the completion of Modules I and II. Each of the first two interviews took place at a different point in the course for each participant The second interview took place after the "South Florida: America's Boiling Pot" segment of the course The third interview took place 30-45 days after the completion of the course to determine not only if learning outcomes were achieved, but also to learn whether the participants began to use what they have learned in the workplace, at home and in the market place Although an Interview Guide was provided, participants were allowed to ramble and/or discuss areas not included in the guide

[Table One Interview Guides Here]

Self Reflective Essay. All the participants were asked to write an essay of 100 words or less that included, but was not limited to the following: a description of their opinions about the course; a critique of the information learned; if and how they plan to implement what was learned; and, how they think the course could be improved or revised. Copies of four randomly selected essays are presented in Table Two.

[Table Two Selected Self-Reflective Essays]

Description of the Coding System. The coding process for this study was determined based on a set of key concepts included in multicultural education and instruction, the objectives Multicultural Communications (PUR 5406/4934), and the intended and unintended learning outcomes. A letter coding scheme was used because it is anticipated that the responses during the reflection periods, interviews and the self-reflective essays would be detailed and simple concepts would easily be identifiable.

[Table Three Coding System Here]

Actual coding was done on the transcribed interview copy. Each of the graduate research assistants was instructed circle the terms or phrases which most closely answer the questions asked and those key concepts identified on the coding system sheet. An asterisk (*) was used in responses in which the same concept was identified more than once. Each interview guide/contact sheet transcript. The name of the coder and the date coded was indicated at the bottom of the interview guide/contact sheet transcript.

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Results and Analysis

Qualitative data are thought to be exceedingly complex, and not readily convertible into standard measurable units of objects seen and heard. They vary in level of abstraction, in frequency of occurrence and in relevance to central questions in the research. The analytic procedures used in this research included organizing the data, generating categories, themes, and patterns and searching for alternative explanations of the data collected.

One-on-one Interviews. The results of the three interviews in tabular and narrative form produced an extensive amount of valuable information. On all three interviews the responses collectively advance the idea that individual cultural identity is a dynamic process which operates in transactions among people of different cultures. All of the responses support the notion that culture and ethnicity, although distinct, are closely related. That behavior manifest itself in their homes, workplaces and communities over time. Participants expressed self-identified behavior change as a result of the course. They indicated that they had become more culturally aware and sensitive to diversity as a result of being enrolled in the course.

The process of cultural awareness then continues as the participants develop the behavior of dealing with everyone as individuals rather than stereotypes of their groups. In the process of developing awareness and sensitivity to the variety of people in the world, the participants appeared to have gained the added benefit of enhancing self-knowledge and increasing their own objectivity. There was consensus among participants regarding the existence of racism in America. Even though all of the participants agreed that racism will always exist in America, they felt that racism is taught and is not an innate human characteristic. The inequities of society such as poverty, discrimination, politics, and lack of education were seen as contributors.

The format, speakers, exercises and assignments in the course were viewed as important by the participants. Their responses support the use of a variety of instructional methods and materials, a seminar format, reality based assignments, an assortment of small group exercises and activities, and use dynamic speakers, knowledgeable of their subject matter. Participants were also found to support the inclusion of specified learning objectives and the presence of an instructor who serves as a facilitator rather than a teacher.

All of the participants indicated they would recommend the course to others including students and the public. They stressed that the course should be required for all students entering the university. The course was seen as way of preparing oneself to survive and prosper in our multicultural society.

The success of a course of this type requires involvement by the participants. Participant responses indicated that the course provided an environment that supports open discussion, questions and comments. In addition participant responses also indicated that the tenets of multicultural education and instruction were imparted in a manner which made them feel they could make comments and ask questions. Participants reported that they expected to walk away from the course with increased cultural awareness and sensitivity as well as an ability to effectively communicate with diverse multicultural groups. They indicated that the course had exceeded their expectations and had armed them with knowledge and skills to help them respond constructively to the changes in their lives, workplaces and communities.

Participants' responses supported the use of the revised pause model. The quantitative evaluation method used provided feedback on learning outcomes, teaching performance and the reflective viewpoints from the students. The components of the revised pause model was seen by participants as a way of measuring what they learned without being tested. Participants felt they were empowered through this evaluation method and could have an impact on the direction of instruction in the course.

Reflection Periods. Three reflection periods were conducted during the course at the end of specified modules. Each reflection period lasted one hour. The first reflection took place following specific structured exercises. The objectives of the module were summarized and a dialogue took place between the instructor and all of the participants. The instructor began the discussion by asking participants a series of questions related to the objectives of the course and each module.

Throughout the three reflection periods participants made comments which indicated a recognition of cultural influences on behavior. They stated that their behavior was most influenced by culture at home, school and work. Participants conveyed a sense of increased cultural awareness and sensitivity to diversity throughout the reflection periods. Participants alluded to the fact that the course had a positive impact on their behavior and once again that self-perceived change in behavior was seen most at work, school and home.

As a result of the discussions that took place in the reflection periods the a section on "American" culture was added to the course as well as group exercises which focus on the impact of language on culture. Module III, Myths and Stereotypes was expanded to include more small group exercises and discussions focusing on how each negatively impacts behavior toward cultures other than our own. Group consensus emerged during the reflection periods that racism exists and will continue to exist in America. Participants felt that racist attitudes are learned at home as children and perpetuated through stereotypes presented in the media.

Throughout the three reflection periods participants mentioned the speakers themselves, as well as comments made by the speakers. They also made reference to specific assignments, exercises and the seminar format. On numerous occasions during the reflection periods the participants indicated that they would recommend this course not only to other students but to the general public. They were impressed with the information learned and wished that the course could have been offered earlier in their academic life. There was group consensus that the environment exists in the course that fosters group discussion, questions and comments. The reflection periods provided them with an opportunity to share, to criticize and to learn about themselves and the other members of the class.

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

Participants indicated during the three reflection periods that their learning expectations were met. They also stated that they learned more than they expected especially from the speakers, assigned readings, assignments and from other class members. All of the participants indicated that they liked the qualitative evaluation method used in the study better than the quantitative method they were required to complete at the end of the course. Participants referred to the interviews and reflection periods on numerous occasions. Participants also stated that the video tapes, textbook and exercises improved their knowledge about the concepts presented in the course. The discussion ended with participants expressing pleasure with the fact that they could interact and share experiences with their classmates without being criticized or ridiculed for their opinions.

The reflection periods were seen as an opportunity to discuss related issues and to reflect on the objectives of the course, and the just completed module. Participants stated that it helped them determine what they learned and what they intended to do with the information outside of the classroom. Group consensus indicated that self-identified behavior change and knowledge acquisition had taken place as a result of the course. On only one occasion the course was revised to address concerns raised in the reflection periods. Participants expressed a preference for the seminar format, exercises, speakers, assignments and instructional methods used in the course. They also expressed a willingness to recommend the course to other students as well as a preference for use of qualitative evaluation method to evaluate the teacher.

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

and the course. Participants indicated that their learning expectations were met and exceeded, and that they had become more culturally aware and sensitive to diversity as a result of the course. The participants indicated that the course had succeeded in preparing them to respond constructively to the changes in their lives, workplaces and communities.

The discussion emphasized the idea that individual cultural identity is a dynamic process which operates in transactions among people of different cultures. Participants responded by providing definitions of the culture and multiculturalism. They expressed an understanding of culture, race and ethnicity from different perspectives and an awareness of the value of culture. Throughout the discussion participants shared their recognition of negative attitudes about cultures which foster inappropriate behavior. Participants also recognized that people problem-solve and manifest behaviors according to cultural learning.

Self-Reflective Essays. A self-reflective essay consisting of 100 words or less was requested and completed by the participants one week prior to the completion of the course. They were asked to complete the following statement. "This class will be over in one week. Now that the course is ending, I feel....." An essay was submitted by all of the participants. All of the participants communicated self- expressed increased awareness and sensitivity to diversity. Participants also stated that they felt the course positively impacted their behavior. A majority of the participants included statements about the exercises, speakers, assignments and the format. A few of the participants alluded to racism and what this course could do to improve racial relations. Several of the respondents indicated that their learning expectations were not only met but exceeded. While only four participants mentioned that they would recommend the course to others in their essays, five participants stated that they felt comfortable making comments and answering questions during the course.

Participant responses included comments about what they learned as a result of their participation in the class, descriptions about what they intended to do with the information they learned, recommendations about how the course should be revised or improved, format, exercises and assignments, personal reflections about their feelings while writing the essay, how the course had affected their behavior and comments about the instructor. Participants did not make reference to their specific cultural identity in the essays.

Participants used the essays as an opportunity to address concerns not raised in the interviews or the reflection periods. They related thoughts, feelings and behaviors from outside of the classroom to events which had occurred during the course. In most cases, participants revealed their feelings and attitudes, pausing to critically reflect on the information learned from the course. The essays provide valuable secondary information which adds another dimension to the data obtained from the other components of the revised pause model.

Conclusions

Analysis of the data collected and presented in tabular and narrative form confirm that fourth generation evaluation is viable for use in a public relations such as course, Multicultural

Communications (PUR 5406/PUR 4934). The analysis determined that the revised pause model can be used in a course such as Multicultural Communications (PUR 5406/PUR 4934) under certain conditions. The most desirable conditions are as follows:

1. The participants are culturally, ethnically and demographically diverse. The more diversity that is present among the participants, the greater the opportunity for divergent opinions, attitudes, experiences and perspectives.

2. The class size does not exceed twenty-five students. Larger enrollments may detract from the instructor's ability to successfully implement the components of the model.

3. The course is taught for a minimum of twelve weeks. Multicultural Communications (PUR 5406/PUR 4934) (PUR 5406/4934) was designed to be a semester-length course to allow for comprehensive instruction in the tenets of multicultural education as well as the principles of communications with ethnically and culturally diverse audiences.

4. Class meeting time of two or more hours. The content of the course includes an assortment of small group exercises, speakers and participant interaction and discussion as well as reflection periods and cannot be done successfully in less that two hours.

5. A variety of instructional methods and materials are used. This is necessary to address the different learning styles of participants in the course and to create an environment that promotes knowledge acquisition for all of the learners.

6. The course is taught in a seminar format is with participants seated facing each other in a semi-circle. The seminar format is preferable because students know in advance they will be expected to participate in the class in a variety of ways. The semi-circular seating encourages interpersonal communication. Participants are forced to talk to one another, rather than at one another.

7. An environment is created that supports open discussion, questions and comments. This type of environment facilitates the instruction of multicultural education and communication, and the implementation of the revised pause model.

8. Reality based assignments. Assignments should be given that require participants to use newly acquired skills as well as those they already possess. The assignments should resemble those the participants will be expected to complete in the work place and the marketplace.

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

9. Dynamic speakers, knowledgeable of their subject matter are presented. It is important that participants are exposed to subject matter experts who are good speakers and who are comfortable addressing issues of salience to their ethnic and/cultural group.

10. An assortment of small group exercises and activities. People learn differently. The inclusion of small group exercises and activities encourages interaction, interpersonal communication and creates an opportunity for everyone in the class to learn from another.

11. Specified learning objectives. The inclusion of specified learning objectives serves as a check and balance system for the instructor and the student. It also provides a basis for negotiation between the student and the instructor if specified learning objectives are not met.

12. The instructor serves as a facilitator. The instructor becomes a part of the instructional process. That individual is there to facilitate learning among adults who bring their past and present to the learning situation. In the role of facilitator, the instructor and the students learn from one another, and learning becomes a collaborative process.

The analysis revealed that the revised pause model is an effective evaluation method for use in multicultural education as perceived by the participants. Participant responses in each component of the substantiate this finding. The information obtained through the use of the revised pause model represent meaningful constructions that the participants formed to make sense of the situations they find themselves in as inhabitants of a multicultural society. It is important to note that participant involvement in the study was voluntary. All 22 students participated in the three interview sessions and the reflection periods, and all prepared a self-reflective essay. Student commitment to the process was demonstrated by the fact that all three of the interview sessions were conducted in addition to the two-hour class meetings, preparation of the self-reflective essay without any incentives and the completion of three written assignments required as part of the course.

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

Further review of the tables indicate that, with respect to the effectiveness of the model, each of the three components of the model accomplished what they were designed to accomplish. The interviews indicated what participants said they learned as a result of their participation in the course, and established the connection between learning outcome and classroom events. These responses obtained during the interviews imply that people manifest behaviors according to cultural learning. How this behavior is exhibited affects the process.

The reflection periods confirmed that the participants thoughts, feelings and behaviors can be related to the world outside the classroom to events inside the classroom. The candid discussions provided the instructor with an opportunity for spontaneous, unstructured dialogue, allowing the instructor the opportunity to reveal her thoughts and feelings and the meanings she gives to connections made by the participants. It also gave the instructor the opportunity to negotiate and agree on changes that should be made to the course and supplied feedback on the progress of the agreed changes. The self-reflective essay affirmed that participants can indeed pause and critically reflect upon what they experienced and learned as a result of the course at home, work and school. The information obtained verified the relationship between predetermined learning outcomes and their connections with classroom activities.

The concept of cultural awareness and sensitivity is a reaffirmation of the truth which many people already know. In interdependent communities, different people must learn to get along with each other to solve common problems and satisfy common needs inherent to community life. Multicultural Communications (PUR 5406/PUR 4934) was predicated on the assumption that cultural awareness and sensitivity reduces prejudice and induces respect, through the encouragement of non-stressful interaction between members of different cultures. The process requires that participants take an active role in developing a state of sensitivity to the variations in the way people think, feel and act. This process begins as they define their own cultural heritage, examine their own values and assumptions, and learn how these affect their relationships with others, particularly with cultural groups other than their own. Participant responses reflect that an active role was taken in the process.

An analysis the various tables of the interviews, reflection periods and self-reflective essays reveal that the revised pause model is useful in identifying self-perceived change in the participants. The model was successful in capturing the participants' feelings and attitudes about the model and the course. Each element of the model extracted information from the participants at various levels. The analysis indicates that participant feelings, attitudes and self-perceived change are consistent throughout the three stages of the model.

Implications For Public Relations Educators

The first and perhaps most significant implication is that fourth generation, qualitative evaluation methods, especially the revised pause model, is a legitimate alternative to the quantitative model. Although it requires more of the educator and the student, the information garnered from such a model is invaluable in enabling evaluation during the process of instruction. It also allows the public relations educator to identify areas where modification and revision is needed during the instruction.

It was found that the revised pause model can be used during the process of instruction, a second implication is that communications educators can begin to use this model as a way of engaging themselves and their students in a continuing process of self-education. By serving as both the researcher and the research subject, public relations educators can move beyond the traditional first, second and third generation evaluation methods of the past to one that provides a more holistic approach discussed by Guba and Lincoln (1989). Fourth generation evaluation seeks to empower the student and the instructor while both are involved in the process. Thus, the information obtained takes into consideration the different contexts (physical, psychological, social, and cultural) which influence the learning process.

A third implication is that the value of the revised pause model lies in its ability to solicit self-perceptions and knowledge acquisition from the participants while instruction is being given. The model furnishes regular opportunities for feedback and allows the instructor to reveal and discuss his or her thoughts and feelings and the meanings given to connections made by the participants. The information obtained allows the instructor to understand the students' world and to determine with what criteria they judge it as well and the instruction given.

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

Educators may find that certain instructional methods are not effective because of the type of learners in the class.

People learn differently when they are learning to perform skills and when they are learning information to change their attitudes. The revised pause model encourages reflection which enables the educator to correct distortions in participant's beliefs and errors in problem solving. Educators should find this an attractive feature of qualitative evaluation particularly since it provides an immediate assessment of whether the stated objectives of instruction are being met. In fact, the model supplies the educator with valuable information that can aid in making revisions or improvements to the instructional design while the instruction is in process.

As the debate concerning teaching evaluations and their importance continues in the academy, a fourth implication of this study is that it offers the educator an additional opportunity to evaluate teaching performance. There is widespread skepticism about students as evaluators of teachers. Students have been criticized for not understanding the importance of teaching evaluations. Their estimations of teachers vary wildly, their evaluations are not reliable measures, they just go on feelings, what they like, what's fun or entertaining, and, they can be influenced by a good show and easy grades. There seems to be agreement that there should be some type of evaluation of teachers by students. And, even the most cynical of teachers knows that colleges operate in a competitive marketplace where students are consumers and without them the academy would not exist. Students can learn without teachers, but teachers cannot teach without students.

Good evaluation is more work, but there is merit in an evaluation that provides useful feedback on learning outcomes, teaching performance and reflective viewpoints from students. Qualitative evaluation, specifically the revised pause model provides the teacher with evidence that the student understood his or her goals and intentions in the course, as well as the results of those intentions and goals. Students possess more data because they see many other teachers in just as much detail. They are in an ideal position to make informed comparisons about the effectiveness of teaching methods. Students know more about the success of different styles of and approaches to teaching than the teacher in many cases. Teachers need discriminating feedback about particular practices and strengths and weaknesses. This information can be captured in vivid detail continuously by the revised pause model.

Collegiate administrators are accustomed to looking for the bottom line and making oversimplified verdicts about teaching effectiveness based on quantitative data. While we cannot underestimate the link between good teaching and good learning, our current preoccupation with a Neilsen rating approach to classroom success encourages student passivity and disregards the importance of what the learner must do in order to learn (Cholakian 1994). More useful results can be obtained from qualitative evaluation using the components of the revised pause model. The data obtained by using the revised pause model can do more to improve teaching than quantitative methods. And finally, the revised pause model offers an alternative which dignifies student evaluations of teachers and makes the process thoughtful and reflective rather than mechanical. Thus, the teacher and the student benefits.

A fifth implication is that the model encourages educators to become facilitators rather than teachers. Today's college classrooms are filled with adult learners of varying ages, experiences, learning styles and motives for learning. Therefore, in order to meet the adult education needs of those enrolling in universities today the educator must become a facilitator. This model encourages facilitation rather than teaching. It is designed to help educators assist adults making sense of and act upon the personal, social, occupation, and political environment in which they live. Facilitation is collaborative and the qualitative evaluation tested in this study is designed to facilitate cooperation and negotiation. When confronting new learning situations either in their personal lives or at work adults can have difficulty adapting to change. They may lack the ability to see new alternatives because of past experiences or inhibiting values, prejudices or assumptions.

A sixth implication is that the revised pause model helps adults learn how to transform their rich life experience from a potential barrier to change into a basis for growth and lifelong learning. When used the model becomes a method of helping adults engage in the kind of critical reflection that will enable them to respond constructively to changes in their lives, workplaces and communities. The components of the model fosters critical reflection and can facilitate learning by providing them with an unencumbered opportunity to recognize and reexamine deeply ingrained values. The model offers participants the chance to pause and critically reflect alone or with one other person or with a group. What results from that reflection is exploration, integration, self-scrutiny, self-reflection and eventually learning.

Finally, the seventh implication is that the instructional design used in this study is one that communications educators can use to more adequately teach their students to be more culturally aware and sensitive to diversity. The tenets of multicultural education can be incorporated into a semester-length course targeted to reach communications students at the graduate and undergraduate level. If curriculum constraints prevent the addition of another course, portions of the course can be used in a pre-existing course.

Another important point must be stressed. This course does not require an ALANA (African-American, Latino, Asian, Native American) group member to teach it, so the absence of such a person should not be a deterrent for providing this sorely need information to aspiring communicators who must be able to communicate effectively in our multicultural society. One need only read the daily newspapers or look at the evening news to see that this country has regressed in terms of its ability to comfortably and effectively deal with its multiculturalism. Racism continues to threaten our lives and our futures. Discussions and debates are taking place, but we have not been able to identify viable solutions to the problems that cause a division among the races. The academy is in a unique position to turn the rhetoric of acceptance and tolerance into action.

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

Recommendations for Further Research

As the emphasis on improved teaching continues to permeate the academy, alternative forms of evaluation besides the quantitative methods of the past, should be examined. The findings of the study discussed in this paper do not suggest that quantitative methods be abandoned. It does, however present strong evidence in support of fourth generation evaluation and the use of a revised pause model during instruction of a multicultural education course in public relations.

The revised pause model should be tested using a variety of public relations courses. The subject matter used in this study covered a small portion of the public relations body of knowledge. It is likely that the results of testing model could be radically different with subject matter that does not require so much introspection and attitude change. The fact remains that as we look to the future, fourth generation evaluation should not be overlooked or taken lightly. If evaluation is truly a teaching and learning process as it relates to public relations, the academy and the profession has no choice but to build on what has been learned from this research.

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Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

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Topic Addressed Teaching Public Relations

Table One: Fall 1993 Study Interview Guide

1. I describe my cultural identify/gender/race/religion as..........

2. Cultural influences shape my behavior at work, at home and/or at school in the following ways....................

3. You've been enrolled in PUR 5406/4934 for at least two or three weeks as a result of this course I am or am not more culturally aware and sensitive to diversity because..........

4. What I have learned in this course has/has not affected my behavior in dealing with racial/ethnic groups other than my own at work, school or etc., because now I..........

5. I strongly believe that racism will/will not always exist in America because....................

6. Review the syllabus. Did you enjoy the course format, exercises, speakers and assignments? If so why or why not?

7. I would/would not recommend PUR 5406/4934 to other students because............................

8. I do or do not ask questions or make comments in the class because I feel...................................

9. I expect to walk away from this course having learned..........................

10. In my opinion the qualitative evaluation used in this course are..............................

Note: Only question three changed in Interviews Two (six or eight weeks) and Three (now that the class is over).

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

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Table Two: Fall 1993 Study Coding System

Question 1
CI = Cultural Identity
CI-R = Race
AA/African-American
C/Caucasian
H/Hispanic
JA/Jamaican
WI/West Indian
IA/Irish American
A/Asian
PR/ Puerto Rican
CI-RE = Religion
C/Christian
CA/Catholic
BA/Baptist
P/Protestant

Question 2
IB = Cultural Influences on Behavior
IB-H = At Home
IB-S = At School
IB-W = At Work
IB-sig = How? In what way?

Question 3
CA = Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity to Diversity
CA+ = Am more culturally aware and sensitive to diversity
CA- = Am not more culturally aware and sensitive to diversity
CA-sig = How? In what way?

Question 4
LO = Self-perceived Impact of Learning from Course on Behavior
LO+ = Positive Impact
LO- = Negative Impact
LO-sig = Where? Location (home, work, school)
How?

Table Two: Fall 1993 Study Coding System (con't)

Question 5
RA = Feeling About Racism in America
RA+ = Positive Feelings/Racism will continue to exist
RA- = Negative Feelings/Racism will not continue to exist
RA-sig = Why do you think so?

Question 6
CD = Course Descriptors
CD-A = Assignments
CD-S = Speakers
CD-F = Format
CD-E = Exercises
CD-sig = Why do you think so?

Question 7
RC = Recommendations Re-grading the Course
RC+ = Would recommend the course to others
RC- = Would not recommend the course to others
RC-sig = Why? Why not?

Question 8
CP = Class Participation Descriptors
CP+ = Positive descriptors/Feel comfortable making comments and asking questions
CP- = Negative descriptors/Do not feel comfortable making comments and asking questions
CP-sig = Why? Why not?

Question 9
LE = Learning Expectations
LE+ = Expectations met
LE- = Expectations not met
LE-sig = Why? How?

Question 10
EM = Evaluation Method
EM+ = Liked the qualitative evaluation methods used in the course
EM- = Did not like the qualitative evaluation methods used in the course
EM-sig = Why? Why not

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

Table Three: Selected Self Reflective Essays

"This is the last class meeting for PUR 5406/4934. Now that the class is ending I feel ______."

Participant Number 17: "That I have learned a lot about other people's culture and heritage. The class had a good mixture of students from different backgrounds and cultures. The assignments were challenging. Professor Miller is a very enthusiastic person and takes great interest in the development of her students."

Participant Number 8: "I have a better understanding of those ethnic groups that were highlighted in the book. What was more interesting was the members of the class. They were multicultural and able t complement Professor Miller's presentations and plan for interaction. The overall experience has made me more keenly aware of other cultural differences that impact my life. I have always dealt with different cultures but now I'm more interested in interaction."

Participant Number 18: "An example of how I feel is the task of completing the final project. It was nice to be able to conjure up ideas on a subject matter I knew little about. I feel that if there actually was a "Facing the Challenges of Diversity" training program, I could contribute. The class has been a real learning experience. It seem dependent on the students and thus is predictable. The class should be a requirement for both graduate and undergraduate communication students."

Participant Number 3: "Good about taking this course. I was hesitant to take a course prefixed PUR, but after learning all the good things from this class, I am glad to hear how different cultures do things and it was also fun learning how similar we all are. The activities were fun and educational. The way the activities were planned and conducted added to their education value. The discussions were frank and this added to the value of the class. Due to the frankness and the open mindedness of class members we all able to contribute and collect information.

Topic Addressed: Teaching Public Relations

Examining Employee Perceptions of Internal Communication Effectiveness

A Paper
Presented to a Research Session of the
Public Relations Division
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ABSTRACT

Examining Employee Perceptions of Internal Communication Effectiveness

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This paper examines the effectiveness of employee communication programs in nine major organizations through a survey sent to a large, stratified random sample of employees that was followed-up with focus groups. There were 8,647 respondents to the survey and 208 employees participated in focus groups. Results reveal a large majority of employees do not consider themselves well informed about what is happening in the organizations where they work. Findings also suggest face-to-face, two-way communication from immediate supervisors is the most preferred and credible source for internal communication. The supervisor also was the most frequently used employee communication source in seven of the nine organizations studied. Respondents also said supervisors were the most effective and the most useful of the employee communication sources available to them. Findings suggest employees who are not communicated with effectively by their supervisors are more likely to seek out information about the organization they work for from other employees, the grapevine and external mass media.

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EXAMINING EMPLOYEE PERCEPTIONS OF INTERNAL COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS

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INTRODUCTION

For nearly half a century, the scholarly, academic literature of public relations has suggested that employees should be an organization's primary target audience. (Cutlip & Center, 1952). However, during this same time period, those who actually practice employee communication suggest, one of the greatest ironies in the practice of public relations is the tendency to short-change the employee audience in many organizations (D'Aprix, 1982).

Fifteen years ago, many organizations paid more attention to external constituencies and ignored employee audiences on the assumption they could count upon employee loyalty and commitment (D'Aprix, 1982). The current organizational economic climate of layoffs, restructuring, downsizing, increased workloads and responsibilities, and huge clouds of uncertainty has diminished this assumption, and brought employee loyalty to an all-time low (Yankelovich, 1994).

According to McNeely (1996-97) the employer-employee relationship used to be simple and well-defined. "Employees counted on employers to provide life-long jobs and stability, (but) employees now have different needs based on their backgrounds and career stages" (p. 30).

As, Yankelovich (1994) has pointed out, "Many corporate responses to a tough and competitive marketplace have pushed relations with employees to the breaking point." And, a variety of research studies now tell us most employees are not loyal to the companies they work for. A recent Princeton University study found only 54% of America's corporate workforce says it's loyal to their employers; similar results hold true when this same phenomenon is examined on a global basis (Wright, 1997). Development Dimensions International discovered a considerable lack of trust between employees and the organizations they work for (Wright, 1997). This study found that 47% of employees say lack of employee trust is a problem; 37% say it's not; and, 16% are uncertain.

Stern (1990) said organizations in the 1990s had become saturated with more educated and less loyal employees. Ruch (1989) suggested public relations practitioners responsible for employee communication need to understand roles are changing. He found managers of the 90s are more likely to be information processors as employees evolve from production workers to knowledge workers.

ABOUT THIS PAPER

This paper examines the effectiveness of employee communication programs in nine major companies or organizations through a mail questionnaire survey that was sent to a large, stratified, random sample of employees and was followed-up with employee focus groups in four of these same companies. The study's principle research question evaluated how well informed employees believe they are about what is going on in their organizations. This research also explores how frequently employees use a variety of internal communication sources, which of these sources they prefer to use, and how credible they considered these sources to be. Quantitative aspects of this research also examined and tested for differences based upon factors such as age, gender and whether employees were management or non-management.

IS EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION PART OF PUBLIC RELATIONS?

It is an assumption of this paper that employee communication is an important part of any organization's public relations function. This is to suggest that a company's internal communication and its external communication should be combined into one operational function and managed in tandem with each other. While this appears to have happened in some instances -- and the trend for this type of arrangement appears to be is on the rise -- there still are a large number of organizations who divide internal and external communication into separate functions. In some cases this is done because some companies appear to believe their external audiences are more important. In other cases it is because organizations believe that maximizing shareholder value is the most important priority, despite the reality this might call for additional downsizing and restructuring.

Smith (1991) and D'Aprix (1984 & 1996) reported evidence of two trends in connection with the relationship between employee communication and an organization's overall public relations or corporate communication function. On one hand, employee communication has become the responsibility of the public relations function in an increasing number of organizations. And, in those organizations where employee communication does not report to public relations, they say human resources, and other corporate functions responsible for employee communication, are working closer with public relations than appeared to be the case prior to the mid-1970s.

Other prior research is inconclusive when reporting whether employee communication programs report through human resources or public relations functions. The *Wyatt Communicator* ("Results of the 1989 Wyatt Communication Survey," 1989) suggested a trend toward having the internal communication function housed in human resources departments. That same year, however, the weekly trade publication *pr reporter* ("Will Public Relations & Human Resources Clash," 1989) said that 70% of employee communication programs were based in public relations departments. A Conference Board study (Troy, 1989) found public relations functions responsible for more employee communication units than human resources or personnel departments.

Public relations literature is filled with references suggesting employee communication is an important part of the public relations process and function. Decades ago, Cutlip and Center (1952) said employees should be an organization's first target audience. More recently, Cutlip, Center and Broom (1994) reported an "organization's most important relationships are those with employees at all levels." (p. 260) Leslie (1991) has said an integral part of public relations is "dealing and communicating with the employees of an organization." (p. 7) Newsom, VanSlyke Turk and Kruckeberg (1996) have listed employee communication as an important element of the public relations function. Wilcox, Ault and Agee (1995) have said employees form a crucial public relations audience and suggested a corporate public relations department "must concentrate on communicating with employees just as vigorously as it does on delivering the corporate story to the outside world." (p. 373) Seitel (1995) has said "internal communications has become a 'hot ticket' in public relations, particularly as organizations face the harsh realities of the 1990s." (p. 306)

HOW IMPORTANT IS EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION?

Regardless of where the responsibility for an organization's employee communication lies --

whether or not internal communication is part of public relations -- the reality continues to exist that external communication frequently gets considerably more attention. And, most books about corporate communication and public relations ignore the reality that employee communication has not always been given serious attention in the public relations process. D'Aprix (1996) acknowledged this and pointed out one of the great ironies in public relations practice is the tendency to shortchange the employee audience. D'Aprix (1996) also claimed many organizations pay careful attention to public constituencies, but ignore employee audiences on the assumption the organization always can count on employee loyalty and commitment.

Yankelovich (1994) suggested the 1980s paradigm of maximizing shareholder value was in direct conflict with the 1990s paradigm of empowering employees to unleash their creative skills and enthusiasm to power corporations to success. He said this conflict has produced these five patterns of employee response:

- Employees no longer believe in job or employer permanence;
- Employees believe employers are no longer loyal to the employee;
- Employees have lost confidence that acquiring new skills will be recognized and rewarded;
- Employees believe that corporate quality initiatives are really shorthand for downsizing efforts; and,
- Employees no longer look to their work as a prime source of satisfaction.

VARIOUS MODELS OF EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

Grunig and Hunt (1984) said internal communication programs began with the development of employee publications during World Wars I and II. As industry grew in support of these war efforts, companies turned to internal publications to socialize employees into their organizations. Cutlip, Center and Broom (1994) claimed printed publications remained the primary media of internal communication. Seitel (1995) agreed saying, "by far the most heavily used medium to communicate with employees is print." (p. 312)

More than three decades ago, Dover (1964) listed these three eras of employee communication:

- The 1940s -- an era of entertaining employees to convince them the organization was a good place to work.
- The 1950s -- an era of providing employees with information.
- The 1960s -- an era where organizations attempted to persuade employees.

Grunig and Hunt (1984) have suggested Dover's eras paralleled their "press agentry," "public information," and "two-way asymmetric" models of the public relations process. Grunig (1992a) later suggested the most effective employee communication programs were those based upon "two-way symmetrical communication" that managed conflict and improved understanding with employees through various aspects of two-way communication.

Smith (1991) pointed to a General Motors policy statement, first issued in 1979, that defines the importance of two-way communication.

Effective two-way communications between management and employees is critical for

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> success in our highly competitive worldwide business.
>
> The need for employee understanding, involvement and cooperation has never been greater -- and a broad base of information about the business is fundamental to the achievement of all these goals. More than ever, GM has an obligation to keep its employees informed about important matters that affect the business and their own livelihood.
>
> Two-way information sharing can improve decision making and work performance by facilitating the making of decisions at the lowest possible levels by employees who know the most about getting the job done right. In turn, this increased participation can contribute to higher levels of employee satisfaction and quality of work life. We need ideas and suggestions from all employees about how to operate more effectively -- at every level of the business. Good communications also can promote better employee understanding and consequent support for the corporation's positions on key public issues. (p. 24)

Grunig (1992a) argued employee communication programs should be practiced in a two-way symmetrical manner for a variety of reasons including the fact that a company's internal communication creates and define's organizational structure. As he put it:

> Systems of internal communication are part of organizational structure and culture, yet they also create structure and culture. The environment affects how the people with power in an organization construct its structure, culture, and communication. Structure, culture, and communication, however, also affect who has power and how an organization perceives its environment and how it responds to the environment. (p. 532)

Smith (1991) and D'Aprix (1996) both insist effective organizational employee communication programs usually receive strong support from organizational leadership. Stramy, Nora and Rogers (1986) pointed out the industrial systems of other nations, especially Japan, were more likely to focus on employee relations and other "human resources," than American industry that is more focused upon capital investment and stakeholder profits. Charlton (1990) has called for additional motivational programs to help U.S. workers survive in the new global economy.

WHO PERFORMS THE EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION WORK?

In addition to where the employee communication function reports in an organization, and the organizational model through which internal communication is practiced, some have suggested is important to understand the type of public relations practitioners who actually carry out an organization's employee communication activities (Wright, 1995).

Extensive research pioneered by Broom and Dozier (1986) has described daily behavior patterns of individuals who practice public relations and identified two major roles: managers and technicians. Managers specialize in conceptualizing and directing public relations programs while technicians perform technical services such as writing, editing, media relations, etc. Even though Broom, Dozier, and a number of other scholars have continued study the roles practitioners function in, most role research still focuses upon public relations people either being technicians or managers. In our own research (Wright,1995) we have suggested the existence of a communication executive role for senior-level public relations practitioners who report directly to an organization's chief executive officer. Grunig (1992) argued that managers are necessary components of "excellent" public relations departments. He said, "less excellent departments consist mostly of technicians whose work is supervised by managers outside the public relations department, managers who usually have less potential for strategic management of public relations than managers trained in communication management." (p. 19)

Grunig (1992a) and Shatshat (1980) also reported employee communication programs are more likely to be staffed by communication technicians with journalistic training. Redding and Tompkins (1988) have explained the dominance of former journalists in organizational employee communication has affected the way internal communication is practiced in many companies. They have suggested journalism encourages one-way, downward-oriented employee communication, and have indicated this has impacted the way many members of organizational management view employee communication.

Even though it has been pointed out many organizations have thoroughly managed employee communication programs that involve more than internal publications (D'Aprix, 1996; Emmanuel & York, 1988; Smith, 1991; Troy, 1989), Grunig (1992a) found employee communication dominated more by a technician, rather than by a managerial, philosophy.

MEDIA VS. INTERPERSONAL INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

Seitel (1995) has pointed out there is no such thing today as a single "employee public." He has written, "(Today's) employee public is made up of numerous subgroups. Indeed, today the staff is generally younger, increasingly female, more ambitious, and career-oriented, less complacent, and less loyal to the company than in the past." (p. 306) Smith (1991) has suggested employee communication practitioners must move beyond traditional internal communication media if they hope to be successful in reaching today's diverse employee audience.

More than a quarter of a century ago, Cutlip and Center (1971) reported on a 1968 study within Illinois Bell Telephone Company that discovered management employees were considerably more likely than rank-and-file, non-management workers to get all the information they would like to have. This study also found that supervisors were considered the most important source for employee communication information.

More recently, Smith (1991) said the most important type of internal communication involved face-to-face discussions between employees and their supervisors. D'Aprix (1996) claimed employees prefer face-to-face communication because it provided "the opportunity for questioning, reading facial expressions and body language, and detecting inflections in voice." (p. 31) Frohrenback and Goldfarb (1990) reported on a large study (n=14,500) the management consulting firm Towers, Perrin, Forster and Crosby conducted on a variety of internal communication sources. They said employees most prefer to receive information from the following sources, listed here in the order of importance specified by employees:

- Face-to-face from their immediate supervisor
- Small group meetings (with their immediate supervisor)
- Top executives
- An annual report to employees
- Employee handbook or other booklets

According to this same study, the bottom five sources employees want to receive information from -- in decreasing order of their significance to employees -- are:

- External mass media
- Grapevine
- Union
- Audiovisual programs
- Mass meetings

Frohrenback and Goldfarb (1990) also found employees said first-line supervisors were not communicating satisfactorily, and most said senior management was out-of-touch with the rank-and-file workforce. Employees also were critical of management's unwillingness to listen to them or to act on their ideas. This study also ranked employee publications high in terms of readability and believability, although only about one-third of the study's respondents preferred publications as a primary information source. While Smith (1991) recommended a major emphasis on supervisor-based, face-to-face communication, he also said it should be backed up by regular and frequent employee publications. Smith (1991) also said periodic research should be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of internal communication activities.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION

In spite of more than a quarter century of evidence suggesting the most effective employee communication programs are those based upon two-way, face-to-face interaction, most U.S. university-based public relations sequences continue to place considerably more emphasis on teaching students how to write and edit company publications. Neither the accrediting guidelines of the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (ACEJMC) nor the certification program of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) even mentions the need for public relations practitioners to know and understand interpersonal communication.

FACE-TO-FACE COMMUNICATION AND EMPLOYEE TRUST

Smith (1991) suggested the lack of trust many employees have for organizational management has become a major deterrent inhibiting the effectiveness of internal communication.

> In many businesses today, there is a strong undercurrent of anger, resentment, fear and mistrust among employees, directed against almost invisible managements. The warm, personal "family" business environments of a generation ago have been replaced by a lack of understanding among employees about what's going on. There is a feeling of hopelessness about their own job destinies and a lack of confidence in management which doesn't really seem to be concerned about their personal welfare. (pp. ix-x)

D'Aprix (1996) echoed many of these same concerns about the lack of employee trust, but also suggested it was closely related to declining employee loyalty.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The data base reported on in this study represents results of 28,510 mail questionnaires sent to stratified, random samples of employees from nine different large companies or organizations. Although the majority of respondents were based in the U.S., some worked in Canada, Europe and Asia. In keeping with confidentiality and anonymity promises made to subjects and the organizations where they are employed, neither respondents nor their employers will be identified in this paper. In some cases questionnaires were completed and returned to individual corporate headquarters.

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In most instances, however, questionnaires were mailed directly to the author in business reply, postage-paid envelopes. A variety of techniques were used to encourage subjects to participate in this research project and usable responses were received from nearly 33% or 8,647 employees.

In addition to this survey questionnaire, focus groups were conducted with 208 employees from four companies involved in the mail study. Focus groups discussions took place after survey results had been analyzed.

Questionnaire

Questionnaires consisted of both open-ended and closed-ended questions. Although nine different questionnaires were used to gather this study's data set, quantitative results reported in this paper concern five-point, Likert-type scale, closed-ended questions that were asked of all subjects. The advantage of gathering information in this manner is the unusually large number of more than eight thousand responses received. A disadvantage involves demographic variables that, at times, are inconsistent. Even with this potential disadvantage, cell sizes of tests based upon various demographic variables -- gender, age, type of employee, etc. -- are considerably larger than most other studies of this nature that can be found in the public relations literature. Gender demographics were available for 367 respondents, the age of 508 subjects was known, and type of employee analysis -- based upon whether respondents were "management" or "non-management" employees -- involved 473 subjects.

How Well Informed Are Employees?

The study's principle question sought to determine how well informed employees believe they are about what is going on in the organizations they work for. This question was asked in a closed-ended fashion on the mail questionnaire and answers were probed in depth during focus group sessions. When asked how well informed employees were in terms of "what is going on in the organization you work for," the following response options were available: "extremely well informed," "adequately informed," "neutral," "poorly informed," "extremely uninformed," and "don't know/no opinion."

Information Source Frequency and Credibility

Several questions were designed to measure the frequency with which a variety of internal communication message sources are used by employees and the level of credibility each of these sources enjoys. Sources inquired about included company publications and video programs, department meetings, immediate supervisors, other employees, the "grapevine," "other internal sources (i.e., bulletin boards, e-mail, intranet, other internal publications, CEO site visits, telephone rumor lines, etc.)," and external mass media. In addition to asking about information source frequency and credibility in the survey questionnaire, a number of questions in the focus groups centered upon these topics.

A smaller set of questions, asked only to a sub-set of the study's respondents (n=2,357) asked employees from what source they most prefer to receive information about the organization they work for.

Role of Supervisors in Employee Communication

Based upon the importance of supervisors discovered in previous research conducted by D'Aprix (1984 & 1992), Pincus (1994), Smith (1991), and others, it was decided to focus several research questions around the role supervisors play in employee communication. These included:

- Whether employees prefer face-to-face or written communication with their supervisors. And how face-to-face communication with supervisors compares to written communication in terms of effectiveness, usefulness and credibility.
- If employees consider their immediate supervisors to be effective communicators.
- If employees think they have good relationships with their immediate supervisors.

Additional Research Concerns

The study also attempted to answer a number of other research questions including:

- Whether employees in large organizations know more about what is going on at the department, work crew, plant, district, etc., level than they know about what is happening at the national or corporate level.

- If preferred information source, frequency of use and credibility of external mass media as sources for information about the organization they work are higher among management or non-management employees.

- If age and/or gender have any significant impact on how well informed employees feel about the organizations they work for.

- How employees are accepting new technology internal communication media such as company audio and video programs, e-mail, internet, intranet, etc.

- How long the average employee retains information contained in employee communication messages.

Quantitative data analysis consisted of examinations of frequency distributions and a variety of central tendency statistical measures -- including t-tests and analysis of variance. The author participated as moderator of each of the study's focus groups and individually collected, coded, tabulated and analyzed this study's qualitative results.

RESULTS

Results displayed in Table 1 suggest only about one-third of this study's nearly nine thousand respondents consider themselves "extremely well" or "adequately" informed in terms of what is going on in the organizations they work for. Consequently, two-thirds of these employee respondents do not consider themselves well informed. A variety of statistical procedures were used to test this item for differences in terms of gender (t-tests), age (ANOVAs), and type of employee (t-tests). With a probability level of $p<.05$, no significant differences were discovered in terms of age or gender. However, management employees considered themselves much better informed about what was going on in their organizations than the non-management workforce ($p=.000$).

Findings shown in Table 2 indicate an employee's "immediate supervisor" is the key to any effective employee communication program. The study's Frequency of Use Scale shows "other employees" and "the grapevine" as the most frequently used employee communication sources, but supervisors are used frequently (67%) as an internal communication source. The Credibility Index displayed in Table 3 clearly indicates the immediate supervisor is the most credible employee information source.

FREQUENCY OF USE COMPARED WITH CREDIBILITY FOR EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION SOURCES

INFORMATION SOURCE	USE FREQUENCY	CREDIBILITY
Immediate Supervisor	67%	66%
Other Employees/Grapevine	69%	34%
Company Publication	56%	55%
Department Meetings	47%	52%
Other Internal Sources	45%	47%
External Mass Media	33%	29%
Employee Video Program	29%	38%

Note: Percentages listed above represent respondents (n=8,647) answering "frequently use" or "use sometimes" on the Frequency of Use Index and those responding "extremely credible" or "somewhat credible" on the Credibility Index.

Employees from seven of the nine organizations surveyed said they used their immediate supervisors as employee communication sources more than any other source. In some, but not all, of these organizational studies, employees were asked to indicate "how effective" and "how useful" they found various internal communication sources. Another question inquired how much employees "like to use" these sources. In all of these instances, immediate supervisors scored highest.

Tests concerning frequency of use and credibility revealed some statistically significant differences ($p<.05$) in terms of age (ANOVAs) and type of employee (t-tests). However, t-tests based upon gender suggest an employee's sex is not a statistically significant factor in determining either frequency of use or credibility of employee communication sources. This study found type of employee and age to be considerably more significant. Non-management workers appear more likely than management employees to use external mass media sources for information about the organization they work for ($p=.006$). Non-management employees also consider these external news media sources to be considerably more credible than those in the management workforce ($p=.001$).

Analysis of variance suggests younger employees use video ($p=.000$) and other new technology-related internal communication sources (e-mail, intranet, etc.) ($p=.001$) more than older employees. The younger members of the workforce also are more likely to consider these sources credible ($p=.003$ *for video;* $p=.037$ *for other internal sources*).

Table 4 shows results of questions asking subjects which source they would select for

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employee communication information if they could receive it from only one source. More than half (53%) selected their immediate supervisor. Company publications (19%) were a distant second followed by department meetings (13%) and other/employees grapevine (11%). Two percent selected "other internal sources" and external mass media. Nobody picked employee video programs. Non-management employees were more likely to prefer external mass media as an information source about their organization (*p=.016*). Management employees were more likely to prefer company publications (*p=.032*) and department meetings (*p=.027*). Focus group and survey open-ended comments suggest non-management employees in particular are likely to turn to the "grapevine" and/or external mass media when their immediate supervisors do not communicate with them openly, honestly and frequently.

The focus group phase of the study discovered employees are considerably frustrated when they consider themselves "extremely uninformed" or "poorly informed" about what is going on in the organization they work for. Without question, focus group participants said their immediate supervisors were their first choice for internal information. Some who regularly used "other employees" or "the grapevine" said they would not turn to these sources if their supervisors communicated more effectively with them.

Focus groups also found that management style plays an important role in the effectiveness of employee communication. Employees who participated in this study's focus groups very much prefer, and some literally insist upon, a contemporary management style where team-building, information sharing, and non-management participation in two-way communication are the norm. Those who think this way consider authoritarian managers an endangered species. Some non-management employees suggested their organizations claim to be supportive of honest, open two-way information sharing between management and non-management employees, but unofficially are more likely to function under autocratic rules.

The focus group results also show that when communication flows freely between employees and their immediate supervisors, employee understanding, trust and performance are enhanced. In particular, non-management employees who have close communication ties with their supervisors were much more likely to use and find credible other internal communication sources such as company publications, employee video programs, etc.

Four of the study's focus groups consisted only of front-line supervisors. These managers are frustrated because they do not believe they get rewarded for being effective communicators. In several instances, supervisors said they choose not to participate in two-way, face-to-face communication even though their company has developed an internal communication plan based upon supervisor-employee face-to-face communication. In one focus group, for example, participants explained they are under considerable pressure from their superiors to produce a certain quantity of the product their company manufactures. As one participant explained, "If we take time to hold a department meeting or communicate with the workforce in some other way, this takes time away from production, and our bosses do not want that." Managerial focus groups also revealed these two other important findings. Many front-line supervisors appear to distrust the hourly employees who report to them, and some have considerable difficulty dealing with massive changes that have taken place in the job of a supervisor since they became one.

Focus groups conducted with non-management employees uncovered a number of concerns rank-and-file workers do not believe are being addressed. Some members of the non-management workforce suggest the organizations they work for have a rigid agenda concerning

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information the companies will disseminate to employees. As one employee put it, "They tell us what they want us to hear, and that usually is not what we want to know." Apparently, this takes place even in organizations that claim to be committed to programs involving honest and open, two-way, face-to-face employee communication.

The impact managerial style has on internal communication effectiveness also surfaced during the focus groups. Non-management employees said iron-fisted, authoritarian managers frequently ignore organizational policies calling for open and honest two-way communication between management and the hourly workforce. Non-management employees who are treated with respect and/or as equals with management in the organization appeared to be much more supportive of company goals and objectives.

For the most part, non-management employees who participated in this study want answers to questions such as the following:

- How is this organization doing?
- Where is this company going?
- What do the immediate and long-range futures look like for my job?
- What am I expected to do?
- How am I doing?
- Am I performing appropriately?
- What do I need to know to do my job better?
- Does anyone in this organization care about me?
- How can I help?

Additional results also discovered:

- Face-to-face communication with supervisors is used more frequently, and considered to be more effective, useful and credible than written communication from these immediate supervisors.

- Employees in large organizations believe they know more about what is going on in their companies at the department, work crew, plant, district, etc., level than they know about what is happening at the national or corporate level.

- Employee video programs are more effective when copies are distributed to all immediate supervisors, when audio versions of these programs are made available to employees who request them, and when sessions where these video tapes are shown include discussions led by an employee's immediate supervisor.

- Only about half the employees we surveyed in this study consider their immediate supervisors to be effective communicators.

- About two-thirds of the employees the employees surveyed tell us they think they have a good relationship with their immediate supervisor.

- Nearly 95% believe it is important for employees to have a good relationship with their immediate supervisor.

- It appears the rate of retention of employee communication messages is quite high. More than two-thirds of this study's respondents indicate they remember half of all the employee information they received one week after hearing, reading or seeing it.

DISCUSSION

This research has revealed a large majority of employees do not consider themselves well informed about what is happening in the organizations where they work. Results also suggest face-to-face, two-way communication from one's immediate supervisor is the most preferred and credible source for internal communication. The supervisor also was the most frequently used employee communication source in seven of the nine organizations surveyed. This study's respondents also said their immediate supervisors were the most effective and the most useful of the employee communication sources available to them. Findings suggest employees who are not communicated with effectively by their supervisors are more likely to seek out information about the organization they work for from other employees, the grapevine and external mass media.

All in all, findings reported in this paper appear to support much of the employee communication research conducted during the past 25 years. However, one might be disturbed knowing that results of this nine-company study of are not nearly as favorable as those of the 17-company composite prepared eight years ago by Towers, Perrin, Forster and Crosby (Smith, 1991). Although this prior research reported more needed to be done in terms of two-way, face-to-face information sharing, it did not appear to find employees as dissatisfied with internal communication as the study at hand.

Results of the present study agree with Smith (1991) and D'Aprix (1996) who both suggested two-way, face-to-face communication between employees and their immediate supervisors should have top billing. As Smith (1991) explained:

> This places heavy responsibility on every manager and supervisor to be as well informed as possible on company matters, and to be an on-going conduit for two-way sharing of information and ideas with employees. The success of supervisor-employee communication depends on the flow of quality information to managers from both corporate and local levels. (p. 131)

The research reported on in this paper uncovered many situations where management-level supervisors in companies committed to two-way, face-to-face information sharing programs apparently do not communicate effectively with their non-management subordinates. Smith (1991) said supervisor-based communication programs need to be supplemented by an effective array of company publications, video and other media as well as by "a regular schedule of face-to-face meetings where employees have the opportunity to hear their top-leaders discuss problems and goals, and to get answers concerning their questions and concerns." (p. 131) Smith (1991) also suggests organizations should insist their front-line supervisors hold regular meetings with the people they supervise.

D'Aprix (1996) suggested supervisors need to be held more accountable for communication behavior, and said companies must make certain education and training are provided in interpersonal communication skills.

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> The best of systems or strategies mean little if there is no accountability for people's behavior. I am still amazed at the number of work organizations that develop solid communication plans and permit managers at all levels to choose not to participate. Would they tolerate a manager who declined to submit a budget for his or her operation on the grounds that such documents are inhibiting to their style? Would they accept the argument that the manager has no time for such activities as financial discipline? That her regular duties keep her so busy that she cannot find the hours to manage a budget? I doubt it.
>
> Would an organization permit people not to submit annual goals and commit to attaining them? Of course not. But the same organization will tolerate managers and other leaders who beg off their communication responsibilities by pleading lack of time or discomfort. (p. 147)

Grunig (1992) has theorized that effective two-way organizational communication programs save money by building alliances between managers and non-managers that can help companies avoid some of the pressures caused by poor internal relationships such as work slow downs, stoppages and strikes.

The impact managerial style has on internal communication effectiveness also needs to be addressed. Results of this study found evidence of iron-fisted, authoritarian managers who ignore organizational policies calling for open and honest two-way communication between supervisors and non-management employees. Smith (1991) said organizations will prosper if they build supervisor-employee relationships "based upon trust, mutual respect and confidence in what committed people can accomplish; and can share information and power for the good of the organization and its employees." (p. 3) On the eve of entering the 21st Century, this study finds evidence that many managers are ineffective and unsuccessful communicators because their managerial style is stuck in the dark ages. As new human values demand greater democracy in the work place, authoritarian supervisors who do not know how to function in the context of a modern management philosophy might need to be replaced by others who will treat their reports with greater respect.

Various results reported in this paper suggest the following might be used as maxims that could lead to effective employee communication:

- Appeal to employee self-interests
- Tell employees first
- Tell employees the bad news along with the good
- Always inform employees about subjects they consider important.
- Use sources of information employees regard as trustworthy, expert, credible and believable
- Involve personal contact
- Make certain the messengers understand the subject they are communicating to employees
- Have a suggested action in mind in case employees ask questions
- Research (benchmark and evaluate) the effectiveness of employee communication activities

While it might be appropriate to blame some of the current employee communication problems upon the way public relations functions are organized, it also is important to face the reality that some of these same employee communication problems have been brought on by the organizations themselves. This especially is true when organizations:

- Relegate employee communication responsibilities to junior staff employees, letting the "experts" handle media relations, stockholder relations, etc.
- Place too much emphasis upon delivering the wrong messages to employees.
- Deliver many of these messages through media employees least prefer to use, such as company publications and other impersonal information sources.

This study's results also hold potential ramifications for public relations education, much of which remains trapped in university-based programs that emphasize print journalism more than any other aspect of communication education. This reality, coupled with the insistence by some educators and practitioners that all public relations people need media relations or working journalism experience, has inhibited the growth and development of employee communication programs in a number of organizations. Grunig (1992a) pointed out that journalism involves one-way communication. To be most effective, public relations, including employee communication, requires two-way communication.

Restructuring, downsizing, mergers, acquisitions, leveraged buyouts and other symbols of change in the corporate marketplace are forcing organizations to learn how to manage employee communication in very different ways. Management must recognize, accept and treat the non-management work force as a primary capital asset. This will require considerable education and training. It means supervisors must have respect for employees who report to them. It means all levels of management will need to consider more carefully the opinions and ideas of non-management employees. Supervisors should neither be soft nor tolerate poor performance, but should do everything possible to facilitate a challenging partnership based on open and honest, two-way, face-to-face communication.

Any organization's public relations function can be an essential tool for accomplishing all of this, but only if senior-levels of organizational management accept and understand the potential of strategic internal communication and use it properly. Used effectively, two-way employee communication becomes an important link between management and employees that can enhance employee morale, performance and trust. Internal communication will be most effective when an organization views employee communication as a legitimate and necessary management function that ranks in importance on a par with communication to important and strategic external publics.

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The following tables and information display results of research studies conducted with 8,647 employees from nine major companies/organizations.

TABLE 1

How well informed employees say they are in terms of what is going on in the organizations they work for.

Extremely well informed	4%	
Adequately informed	28%	32%
Neutral	22%	
Poorly informed	35%	
Extremely uninformed	10%	45%
Don't know/No opinion	1%	

Mean score: 2.8

TABLE 2

Subjects from a variety of different companies and organizations (n=8,647) were asked to indicate **how frequently they used** a variety of employee communication sources. Results to the frequency of use index follow:

Immediate supervisor

Frequently use	39%	
Use sometimes	28%	67%
Uncertain	12%	
Rarely use	16%	
Never use	4%	20%
Don't know/No opinion	0%	

Mean score: 3.8

How Frequently Sources Are Used (*Table Two Continued*)

Other employees/Grapevine

Frequently use	35%	**69%**
Use sometimes	34%	
Uncertain	13%	
Rarely use	10%	**17%**
Never use	7%	
Don't know/No opinion	2%	

Mean score: 3.3

Department meetings

Frequently use	18%	**47%**
Use sometimes	29%	
Uncertain	16%	
Rarely use	19%	**34%**
Never use	15%	
Don't know/No opinion	3%	

Mean score: 3.1

The Principal Employee Publication of the Company or Organization

Frequently use	24%	**56%**
Use sometimes	32%	
Uncertain	17%	
Rarely use	14%	**24%**
Never use	10%	
Don't know/No opinion	3%	

Mean score: 3.3

How Frequently Sources Are Used (*Table Two Continued*)

Employee Video Programs

Frequently use	11%	**29%**
Use sometimes	18%	
Uncertain	11%	
Rarely use	21%	**51%**
Never use	30%	
Don't know/No opinion	9%	

Mean score: 2.4

Other internal communication sources (i.e., bulletin boards, e-mail, intranet, other internal publications, CEO site visits, telephone rumor lines, etc.)

Frequently use	21%	**45%**
Use sometimes	24%	
Uncertain	14%	
Rarely use	13%	**34%**
Never use	21%	
Don't know/No opinion	7%	

Mean score: 3.0

External Mass Media

Frequently use	16%	**33%**
Use sometimes	17%	
Uncertain	16%	
Rarely use	18%	**36%**
Never use	18%	
Don't know/No opinion	15%	

Mean score: 2.5

TABLE 3

Subjects from a variety of different companies and organizations (n=8,647) were asked to indicate **how credible** they considered a variety of employee communication sources to be in terms of providing information about their jobs. Results to the credibility of sources index follow:

Immediate supervisor

Extremely credible	29%	**66%**
Somewhat credible	37%	
Uncertain	19%	
Somewhat noncredible	10%	**15%**
Extremely noncredible	5%	
Don't know/No opinion	1%	

Mean score: 3.7

Other employees/Grapevine

Extremely credible	4%	**34%**
Somewhat credible	30%	
Uncertain	39%	
Somewhat noncredible	16%	**23%**
Extremely noncredible	7%	
Don't know/No opinion	4%	

Mean score: 3.0

Department meetings

Extremely credible	13%	**52%**
Somewhat credible	39%	
Uncertain	25%	
Somewhat noncredible	8%	**14%**
Extremely noncredible	6%	
Don't know/No opinion	9%	

Mean score: 3.2

Perceived Credibility of Sources (*Table Three Continued*)

The Principal Employee Publication of the Company or Organization

Extremely credible	19%	**55%**
Somewhat credible	36%	
Uncertain	25%	
Somewhat noncredible	6%	**12%**
Extremely noncredible	6%	
Don't know/No opinion	9%	

Mean score: 3.3

Employee Video Programs

Extremely credible	14%	**38%**
Somewhat credible	24%	
Uncertain	21%	
Somewhat noncredible	8%	**16%**
Extremely noncredible	8%	
Don't know/No opinion	26%	

Mean score: 2.5

Other internal communication sources (i.e., bulletin boards, e-mail, intranet, other internal publications, CEO site visits, telephone rumor lines, etc.)

Extremely credible	17%	**47%**
Somewhat credible	30%	
Uncertain	22%	
Somewhat noncredible	7%	**14%**
Extremely noncredible	7%	
Don't know/No opinion	18%	

Mean score: 3.0

External Mass Media

Extremely credible	10%	**29%**
Somewhat credible	19%	
Uncertain	22%	
Somewhat noncredible	10%	**18%**
Extremely noncredible	8%	
Don't know/No opinion	30%	

Mean score: 2.2

TABLE 4

Subjects from a variety of different companies and organizations (n=2,357) were asked to indicate how much they **prefer to use** the following employee communication sources:

EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION SOURCES THIS STUDY'S RESPONDENTS MOST PREFERRED TO USE

INFORMATION SOURCE	Use Preference
Immediate Supervisor	53%
Other Employees/Grapevine	11%
Company Publication	19%
Department Meetings	13%
Other Internal Sources	2%
Mass Media	2%
Employee Video Program	0%

Note: Subjects were asked if they could receive information about the organizations they work for from only one source, which of the sources listed above they would most prefer. Percentages listed above represent respondents (n=2,357) answers.

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Non-profit Service Organization Partnerships with University Communication Programs: Cultivating the Values of Community Service and Volunteerism

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Non-profit Service Organization Partnerships with University Communications Programs: Cultivating the Values of Community Service and Volunteerism

The educational sector in our nation has faced major criticism in the last couple of decades. Schools are criticized for being isolated from their communities and for producing passive learners rather than individuals willing to be involved and to take responsibility for their educations, and subsequently, their lives.[1] The educational reform movement gaining the greatest momentum seems to be service-learning, a method characterized by active participation of students in experiential learning activities that meet actual community needs. Conrad and Hedin observe that advocates of service-learning "can be divided into those who stress the reform of youth and those who stress the reform of education."[2]

Those who seek to reform youth argue that their lack of participation in our democratic society has manifested itself in youth crime, teen pregnancy, teen suicide and substance abuse. The problem with this approach identified by focus groups of Utah community leaders[3] is that community service is meted out as a punishment in response to undesirable behavior rather than incorporated in positive ways in the lives of teen offenders.

The more promising effort seems to be among those targeting the reform of education. Those in this group emphasize the integration of community service into the academic curriculum as routine learning activity. Although the focus is on the educational process, one of the end goals is "the personal, social, and intellectual development of young people and preparing them to become involved and effective citizens."[4]

This approach seems to focus on the institution or educational system, while recognizing the need for individual growth and commitment. Nevertheless, what seems to be too often absent in the discussion of service-learning approaches is the development of a personal value system that places a high priority on serving others. The word "values" is avoided by the use of phrases such as "developing a sense of caring" or "recognizing civic responsibility." We are afraid to affirm the instinctive sense of the value of service in the overall quality of life. Nevertheless, as articulated by Robert K. Goodwin, president and CEO of the Points of Light Foundation, "we must stress the importance of attitude and values in shaping behavior. Because unless we are getting into the psyche of the way people think and feel and believe about their requirements of their citizenship, we will seldom be able to change their behavior to effect (sic) what they do and how they do it."[5]

Also absent in the discussion is systematic reference to the role of mentors and mentoring in service-learning. Perhaps the avoidance of a discussion of values renders the role of mentor unnecessary. Nevertheless, it would seem that such a role model and mentor would be critical to the development of the attitude of community service that should be the long-term objective of any service-learning effort. This paper will focus on the use of service-learning as a legitimate experiential method of education that concurrently builds a values foundation that enriches one's existence. It also demonstrates the importance of mentorship in developing the attitudes that motivate service behavior.

FOUNDATION PRINCIPLES OF SERVICE-LEARNING

Community service as an experiential education approach is rooted in the theories of John Dewey and Jean Piaget[6] who stress that meaning and understanding (learning) is a result of interaction with the environment. While models may differ slightly, most have similar organizational criteria.[7]

The first criterion is planning and preparation, including clearly articulated learning objectives and preparatory reading and discussion. The activity itself must be well-structured and consistent with the educational level of the students. Many believe that students must be involved in the planning for the activity to be truly successful.

Next, the service must be meaningful to both the student and to the community. The student must have the opportunity to learn and apply new skills, to think and to solve problems. The activity must continually reinforce classroom learning with real-world experience. For the community, the service must fill a recognized need and have tangible outcomes.

Finally, the learning process must conclude with an opportunity for a student to reflect on the relationship of the service to his/her academic work. Whether through written work or discussion, students must be able to see their experience as reinforcing principles being taught in the classroom.

Expanding the Theoretical Foundation

While activities based on these principles are obviously a sound educational approach, service-learning has the potential for a far greater influence on students than just experiential learning. If we are truly concerned with influencing students to develop caring and a sense of civic responsibility, then we must base our efforts on the theoretical work done on developing and changing values and attitudes. From the seminal work of Milton Rokeach,[8] we understand that attitudes are collections of beliefs and values around a focal point, and that attitudes are predispositions to behave. Truly then, as stated by Goodwin, "behavior which is designed to improve the quality of life of communities, cannot be really affected and changed until people's attitudes about that behavior change as well."[9] It follows then that if one of the objectives of educational reform through service-learning is to motivate habits of service behavior, then we must talk about approaches that develop and change the values and attitudes of students to that end.

Further, research on voting behavior by Katz and Lazarsfeld[10] indicates that the role of opinion leaders is of critical importance in changing values and attitudes. We must recognize that opinion leaders, or mentors, are an essential part of the service-learning process. While the educator is not the only individual that could fill the mentor role, he/she is perhaps the most obvious choice, particularly at the university level. Opinion leaders are defined as individuals who possess greater information, experience and expertise, and who are trusted because of status and/or previous performance.[11] Educators at the university level are often natural opinion leaders, and hence in a position to positively affect the values, attitudes and behavior of students. This mentorship role must be built into any service-learning approach at the university level, and may also have beneficial effects, although perhaps not as pronounced, at the secondary level as well.

Service-learning in a University Education

Most of the programs advocating service-learning focus on the primary and secondary levels of education. Few provide guidelines for incorporating service-learning into college curriculum. Nevertheless, higher education preparatory to an individual's career, seems a logical place for service-learning which ostensibly attempts to create real-world learning that would cultivate life-long habits of community service. The particular opportunity to provide career mentors seems to be especially extent at the college level.

Although values and attitudes are more easily shaped at an earlier age, service-learning at the university level provides the opportunity to reinforce community service values and associate them as part of an overall quality approach to life. At this level, individuals are making decisions about the directions their lives will take, and are likely to incorporate a service orientation as part of their life's work if taught to do so through service-learning opportunities and by the example of their mentors. Further, as students approach graduation and the transition into their careers, the work they do as part of service-learning is more likely to be of value to the community and to the organizations they serve. This utility enhances the service-learning experience and helps students to shape values and develop habits of service because the work they do is truly making a difference.

For these reasons, the criteria for setting up a service-learning experience must include the three mentioned above--clear learning objectives and student involvement in planning, opportunities from which both the student and the community benefit, and opportunity to reflect and discuss the experience in the context of academic principles. But the experience requires a fourth element in addition to the three. At the university level, for service-learning to accomplish its purposes in education and to develop civic responsibility within the individual, students must have a mentor from whom to learn the values and attitudes that predispose service behavior subsequently.

SERVICE-LEARNING MODEL OF BYU'S PUBLIC RELATIONS PROGRAM

The public relations program at Brigham Young University has always had a tradition of service. The faculty who have mentored public relations students in the last three decades have been exemplary in their commitment to the community and to the university. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of changes took place in the public relations program that set the stage for a more formal value emphasis on service. Two new faculty members were hired from private industry. Both of these individuals saw the potential for students to practically apply public relations principles and skills for the benefit of non-profit organizations who would actually need and use student assistance. About the same time, the leadership of the public relations emphasis was passed to one of the new faculty members.

Shortly thereafter, the retirement of one of the long-time public relations professors opened a position for another new faculty member. The individual hired for that position shared the same personal commitment to community service as the other two new faculty members. Three of the four members of the public relations faculty were relatively new to the program and to the university. At about the same time, a formal strategic planning process was initiated by the Department of Communications. This opened faculty discussions not only on the curriculum specifically, but on the guiding principles of public relations education at BYU.

Objectives or Desired Attitude and Behavioral Outcomes

Discussions among the faculty yielded a consensus of the importance of students practically applying public relations principles and skills. The program has always had a solid foundation in bridging the theory and the practice of public relations in order to produce the most qualified and competent graduates possible. The internship requirement was established in the department years earlier for that very purpose. But the opportunity to link students with non-profit service organizations provided students the chance to contribute more meaningfully because the recipient of the service was less likely to gain counsel from other sources. Further, it underscored the importance of professionals using their time and talents to return value to their communities. As students saw the need and received the gratitude of those served, it was believed they would begin to develop a predisposition to provide community service when given other opportunities. Although no specific plan was put in place, the desired outcomes could be categorized as follows:

- Students will be able to see classroom principles in real-world application.
- Students will gain better practical experience when working with a real-world client--like a non-profit organization--that truly needs and will use their service.
- Students will learn to work well with others in solving problems and implementing solutions.
- Students will develop professional contacts the will help them find internships and jobs, and that will assist them throughout their careers as well.
- Students will develop an understanding of problems faced by different sectors of a community and gain an appreciation for the continual need to support (with volunteer time and charitable contributions) those organizations that address the needs.
- Students will experience the rewards of becoming involved in community development and understand their responsibility to use their training and skills to help others.
- Students will understand that a well-rounded life includes participation in the community.
- Students will develop patterns of community service and involvement that will endure throughout their lives.

The last four outcomes were those tested in this study. Although the first four outcomes are routinely evaluated as students complete their educations and gain internships and employment, this study is the first attempt to systematically evaluate the influence of the public relations faculty and curriculum on value development and service behavior subsequent to graduation. Much anecdotal information exists, but honest evaluation requires a more systematic study.

The Model and Driving Philosophy

The philosophy behind the service-learning model was that partnerships with non-profit organizations in the community would create long-term relationships that would provide continual opportunities for students to apply academic principles in real-world environments. Faculty mentors who had well-established relationships with the same organizations were also deemed important. Students should be able to observe the faculty in service to the same organizations providing opportunities for the students to learn through serving. The long-term relationship is important to ensure that students see the difference their service makes. The faculty relationship is important to ensure that students observed the community service commitment of their mentors, and recognize the benefits of emulating that in their own lives. It was deemed important that the organizations also know of the philosophy and learning approach of the faculty to ensure a learning environment was created whenever service was rendered. Service-learning partnerships would be drawn on for experiential opportunities in several areas:

- As clients presenting real-world communication problems in classes at all levels (235 Introduction to Public Relations, 336 Case Studies in Public Relations, 421 Public Relations Writing, and 435 Senior Campaigns in Public Relations).
- As pro bono clients for Bradley Public Relations, the student-run firm.
- As candidates for service projects for the BYU chapter of the Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA).
- As candidates with projects for appropriate extra credit for community service in public relations classes.
- As organizations providing internships and jobs for public relations students and graduates.

Evaluation of Service-learning in the Public Relations Emphasis

Structural similarities between the marketing communications (formerly advertising) emphasis and the public relations emphasis in BYU's Department of Communications provided an ideal arena for a comparative study of graduates. The students all have similar backgrounds within the institution and come from the same societal, religious and familial circumstances. They have been drawn to a profession of advocacy and persuasion based on using communication media to motivate specific desired behaviors among target publics. They have an orientation toward business and find it strengthened through required coursework.

Students in both programs begin their communications education with a series of foundation courses in mass media and society, theory, and communications law. They take the same research course and a senior seminar in ethics. Further, both marketing communications and public relations majors complete prerequisite introductory courses prior to admission into their respective programs. Once in their majors, they both take skills courses and culminate their educational career with a senior campaigns course and an internship.

The two senior campaigns courses are structured almost identically. Each requires the students to form working groups or "agencies" which then prepare an entire campaign for an actual client. The students do extensive research, plan a full-scale campaign and pitch the campaign to the client at the conclusion of the course. The marketing communications majors typically respond to the challenge presented each year by the American Advertising Federation, and prepare marketing campaigns for for-profit retailers such as Chevrolet, Saturn, and VISA. In contrast, the public relations students always respond to a problem presented by a non-profit organization that truly needs their assistance. As mentioned above, clients have included a broad range of organizations such as the United Way of Utah County, Intermountain Organ Recovery Services, Utah State Parent-Teacher Association, Utah Division of Mental Health, Utah Commission on Volunteers, the U.S. Transplant Games, Salt Lake City's

Recycling Program and many other non-profits that could truly benefit from the services rendered by the students as they were completing their educations.

It must be perfectly clear that this comparison is in no way an indictment of the marketing communication program at BYU. The marketing communication faculty at BYU are some of the best in the nation, well recognized for their scholarly contributions as well as their ability to produce outstanding and successful graduates. Some of them are also personally involved in community service, but do so entirely separate from their university assignments. Their focus has been to produce ethical individuals who are well-prepared professionally for the competitive marketplace, and the marketing communication faculty have truly done so.

On the other hand, the public relations program at BYU has also received nation-wide acclaim. Its graduates are also among the very best in the country and are highly successful in their profession. The comparison is a convenient one because the programs are so similar in structure. Given the similarities, the marketing communications/advertising graduates provide a comparison--a kind of control group to evaluate the service-learning approach implemented by the public relations faculty since 1990.

This is a critically important point. This study is not a comparison of advertising and public relations students to determine which have the "best" values. We did not test the impact of the ethics and values pedagogy of the marketing communications faculty which, in the words of one faculty member "focuses primarily on ethical responsibility in message design (i.e., advertising aimed at children, avoidance of deception, and portraying women and minorities in equitable and responsible ways)." Because of the similarity of the programs, advertising graduates provided the comparison group--those who did not receive the service-learning emphasis in lectures, exercises, practicum and mentorship. They allowed us to test the effect of the service-learning approach on public relations students.

Methods of Evaluation

Two types of methods were applied in this study. First a survey of graduates of the two programs was implemented. The survey was followed by two focus groups of public relations graduates to ascertain more in-depth information about attitudes and behaviors.

The survey was conducted with a 95 percent level of confidence and a +/-5 percent margin of error. In the spring and summer months of 1996, 600 surveys were sent to randomly selected advertising/marketing communication and public relations graduates. Surveys were sent under cover letter signed by the emphasis leaders of both marketing communication and public relations. Surveys that were returned for incorrect address were mailed again with the proper address, with the exception of 52 surveys for which a new address was unavailable. The response rate was 47.5 percent of 548 surveys actually received by respondents (35.8 % among advertising/marketing communication graduates, 61.9% among public relations graduates with 2.3% unusable because no major was indicated). Table 1 shows the breakout of the study universe and the stratification of respondents.

Table 1. Population Characteristics and Sample Breakout

Graduation Year	Advertising/Marketing Communications	Public Relations	Annual Total	Percentage of Six-Year Total
1990	86	63	149	16.7%
1991	97	57	154	17.2%
1992	114	59	173	19.4%
1993	90	76	166	18.6%
1994	67	70	137	15.3%
1995	55	59	114	12.8%
Total	509	384	893	100%
	57%	43%		

	Advertising/Marketing Communications	Public Relations	Total
Surveys Sent	300 (58.9% of graduates)	300 (78.1% of graduates)	600
Surveys Returned Undeliverable	13	39	52
Surveys Received	287 (56.4% of graduates)	261 (68% of graduates)	548
Surveys Completed (6 unusable)	93 (18.3% of graduates)	161 (41.9% of graduates)	254 usuable (260 total)
Response Rate	32.4%	61.7%	47.5%
Representation in Sample	36.6% (of sample) 95% Confidence	63.4% (of sample) +/- 5% Margin Error	

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Figures 1 through 4 describe some of the characteristics of the survey respondents. Representation in the sample of each of the six years of graduation correlates closely with the universe stratification by graduation year. Male-female ratio (45.1% to 54.9%) also correlates closely with the universe. There appears to be a response bias correlated with major. Public relations graduates responded at nearly twice the rate of advertising/marketing communication graduates despite the cover letter being signed by the emphasis leaders of both majors. This phenomenon may reflect a greater ability on the part of the public relations graduates to identify with the topic and terminology used in the study because it was a systematic part of their curriculum.

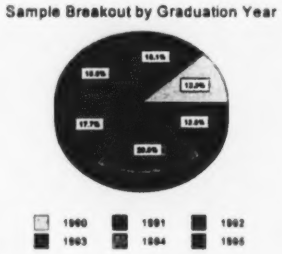

Figure 1

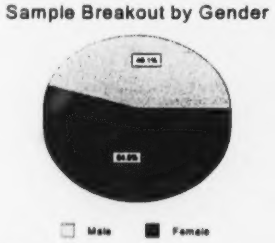

Figure 2

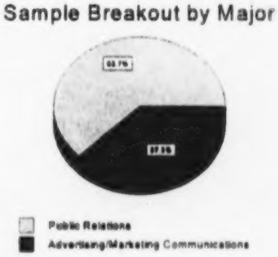

Figure 3

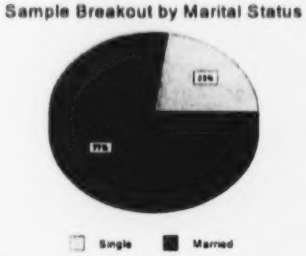

Figure 4

The two focus groups were conducted in July of 1996 among students graduating in public relations between 1990 and 1995 (the same parameters as the survey). The focus groups probed motivations and other information regarding charitable giving and volunteer service behaviors. The focus groups provided valuable insight into the behaviors identified in the survey research.

Limitations

As already indicated, the study does not address the ethics and values pedagogy of the marketing communications program. By extension, it does not evaluate the role of mentorship or course content in

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the formation of those ethics because those questions were not asked. The terminology was taken from the service-learning approach of public relations.

In addition, the differing orientations of the two professions may account for differences in post-graduate behavior. The nature of the public relations profession requires its members to be involved in the organization's interface with the community. Thus, they may have a professional orientation to community service.

Further, the lower response rate of the advertising graduates (just over a third of those surveyed) may result in a respondent bias which could obscure otherwise significant results. Nevertheless, the results carried enough significance to allow us to evaluate the service-learning model.

Research Results

The survey was designed to collect information on the perceived importance of community service as part of a well-rounded, happy lifestyle. It also asked respondents to assess the influences that helped them shape their personal value systems. Finally, it collected information on volunteer involvement and charitable contributions within the last year.

Community Service Value Ranking. Respondents were asked to rank eight values or behaviors--family, money and property, community service, professional status, social status, good friends, spiritual development, and fun and recreation--according to their importance in achieving a well-rounded, happy lifestyle. Not surprisingly, family and spiritual development were consistently ranked as the most important values/behaviors (see **figure 5**). When considering the top three values, good friends takes the third place ranking (see

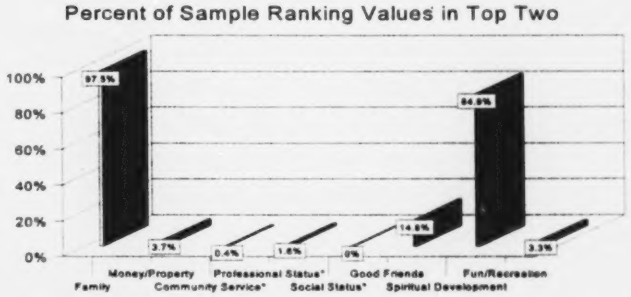

Figure 5

*No 1st Place Rankings

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figure 6). Not until we look at the rankings of values/behaviors in the top four does community service start to emerge as significant at all. Even then, as depicted in **figure 7**, its showing is a dismal seventh behind fund and recreation (fourth), money and property (fifth), and professional status (sixth).

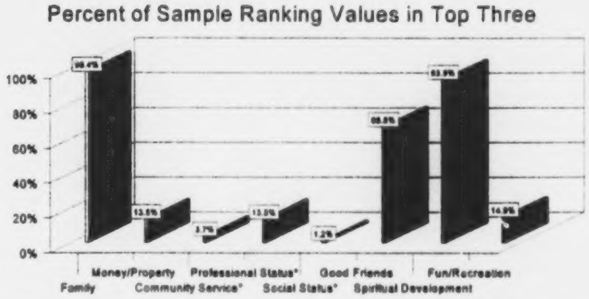

Figure 6

*No 1st Place Rankings

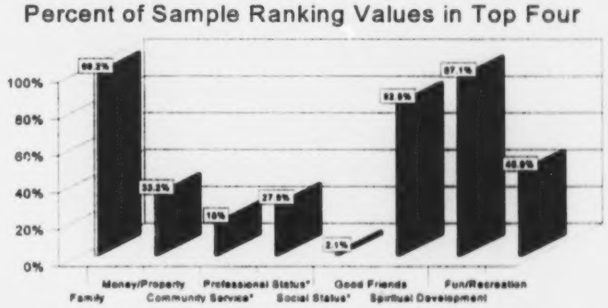

Figure 7

*No 1st Place Rankings

Crosstabulated data, however, show public relations graduates ranking community service among the top four values more often than the comparison group (see **figure 8**). **Figure 9** shows the consistently higher value ranking of community service by public relations graduates across all eight values.

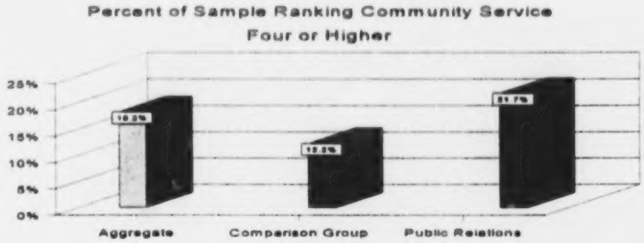

Figure 9

Influence of Mentorship and Curriculum in Shaping Value Systems. Respondents were then asked to assess the importance of certain influences in shaping their value systems. Again, not surprisingly for the

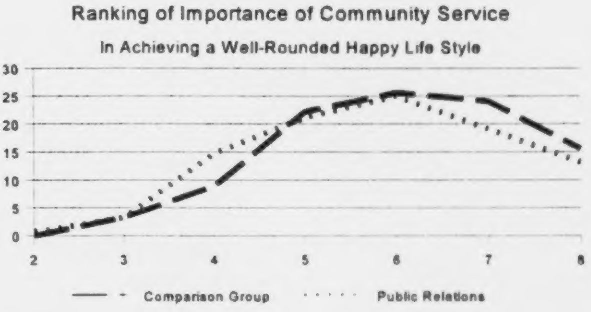

Figure 8

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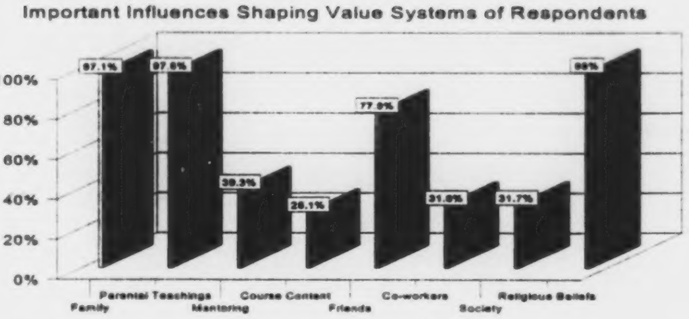

population, family, parental teachings, and religious beliefs were all consistently identified as somewhat or very important factors (see **figure 10**). Mentoring by advertising or public relations faculty was identified as a somewhat or very important influence by 39.3% of the respondents, while advertising or public relations course content was identified as influential by only 28.1% of the sample.

While not ranked as high as familial or religious influences, the ranking points to the potential for mentoring to aid students in making positive life choices. When that influence is specifically directed, as it has been among the public relations faculty since 1990, the influence is even more pronounced. Crosstabs show that a significantly higher percentage of public relations graduates considered mentoring (46.1%, p=.005) and course content (30.9%, p=.037) important in shaping their personal value systems (see **figure 11**). Nearly half of the public relations graduates said that mentoring by their public relations professors

Importance (Somewhat or Very Important) of BYU Adv/PR Education in Shaping Value Systems of Respondents

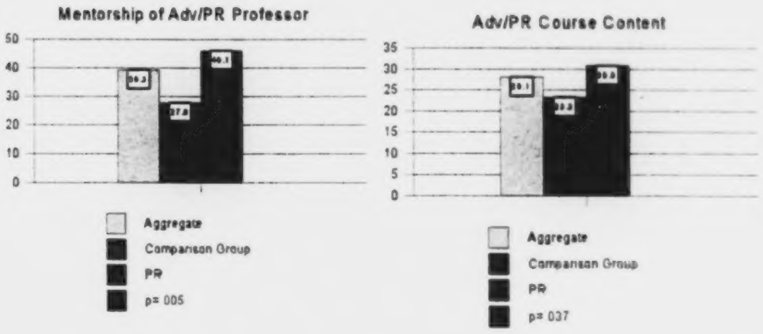

Figure 11

*None of the comparison group rated mentorship as a 4 (very important)

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was somewhat or very important in shaping their personal value systems, while just over a quarter of the comparison group indicated mentoring as influential. Interesting enough, while 6.6% of public relations graduates rated mentoring as very important (four on a scale of one to four), none of the comparison group rated mentoring higher than somewhat important (three on a scale of one to four). Apparently, the planned efforts of the public relations faculty to have an influence in shaping the value systems of their students, particularly in the area of community service, have indeed made a difference.

Post-graduation Community Service Behavior. Although the data show evidence of the influence of faculty mentorship in shaping value systems among public relations graduates, and although those graduates rank community service as more important to a well-rounded, happy life than do the comparison group, the most telling results are whether or not the values have motivated service behavior. On this criteria, the differences are less clear. Crosstabs of data regarding respondents currently engaged in service (excluding church assignments), show marginal difference (see **figure 12**). The data regarding those who had made charitable contributions in the last six months (excluding religious contributions) also showed no difference (see **figure 13**).

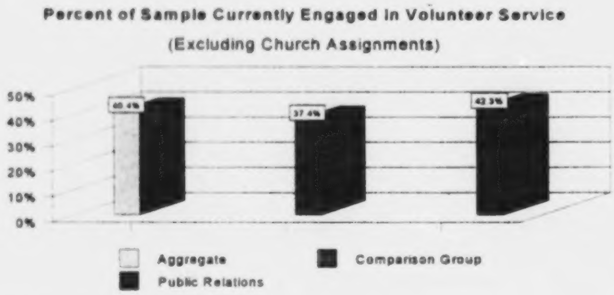

Figure 12

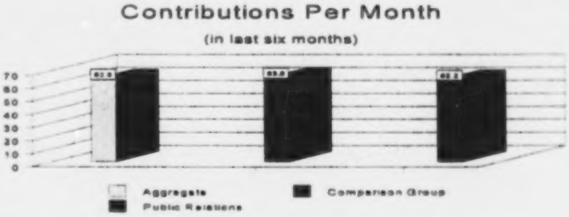

Figure 13

The one truly significant finding in service behavior (p=.008), as depicted

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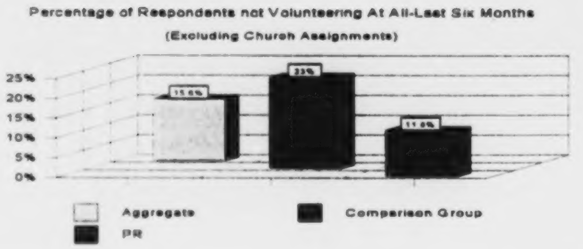

Figure 14 p=.008

in **figure 14**, is that fewer public relations graduates responded that they had not engaged in community service in the last six months (11.6%) than did the comparison group (23%). The reverse of that data indicates that, among respondents, nearly nine out of ten of public relations graduates have engaged in some kind of community service in the last six months. Even given the lower proportion of advertising/ marketing communications respondents volunteering, the number of graduates of both programs engaged in community service is certainly impressive.

Nevertheless, the behavior (shown in figures 12 & 13 previously) is not as strong a representation of the values as Rokeach and others would have predicted. The transcripts of the focus groups perhaps contain some explanation. Students in the focus groups expressed that the community service emphasis in the public relations program had indeed predisposed them to the importance of contributing meaningfully in service to one's community. Some expressed, however, that subsequent to graduation, their volunteer activity declined because opportunities were not as readily available as they had been made by organizations and faculty in the university. Many expressed that, although they believed service was important, they were not sure how to go about getting involved. In the university, projects were organized and opportunities made available to them. Once graduated, some were unsure as to how to find service opportunities as individuals and for their families.

This rationale is supported by the data. Service in the last six months (which showed significant difference between the two groups) may have measured isolated acts of service which are more likely to be a group project--one possibly organized by someone else. The data on current volunteer service measured an ongoing volunteer responsibility which the individual would have likely sought out

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personally. That comparison showed no significant difference between the two groups. This finding supports that although the public relations graduates may have stronger attitudes toward service, they are not finding those opportunities themselves.

Further, students in the focus groups expressed that, as a result of the emphasis placed on community service by the public relations program, a disproportionate number of the public relations graduates had sought employment in the nonprofit sector, or in corporate community relations positions which provide the opportunity for constant involvement in community service. This is a phenomenon not tested by the survey research.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although it can be said that this study confirmed to some degree the outcomes expected by the public relations faculty, it also identifies some areas for improvement or alteration in the approach. From the study we may conclude that:

- A service-learning curriculum combined with faculty mentorship has likely made a difference in the shaping of community service values among BYU public relations graduates since 1990.
- The approach has had an effect, although somewhat limited, on the subsequent community service behaviors of those graduates.

Beyond the immediate conclusions, the study indicates that university professors who consciously take on a role as career mentors can have a tremendous impact in shaping the life values of their students. This finding means that we can set an example for positive behaviors through our curriculum and our involvement. Our influence is very possibly more potent than we thought. That makes our responsibility to our students much greater.

Nevertheless, the success of the curriculum and mentorship in shaping community service values is somewhat hollow in light of the marginal behavioral change. We can perhaps draw from Patrick

Jackson's Behavioral Public Relations Model[12] to alter the service-learning approach to more effectively motivate behavior. Jackson indicates that it is not enough to influence values and attitudes. Motivation requires a "triggering event" to translate values and attitudes into the desired behavior. Although the curriculum and mentorship of professors helped to shape values, there was no attention given to training students to find opportunities to put those values into practice. To extend an old platitude, we taught our students how to fish, but didn't teach them how to find the river.

What we have learned is that our students can be mentored and taught to develop the value of service in a well-rounded, happy life. But we have also learned that we must teach our students how to identify and develop opportunities for service on their own. This may mean creating even stronger partnerships with particular nonprofit organizations that exist beyond the boundaries of the university and its surrounding community so that students will recognize and affiliate with community service organizations that will provide them opportunities beyond graduation. It may also mean adding an element to service-learning that teaches students to identify needs within a community and find opportunities to make a difference in filling those needs.

In spite of some indicated revision, the public relations students at Brigham Young University can be assured that their curriculum and their professors will continue to emphasize the importance of personal involvement in community service. We believe that it is one of the most important elements in evaluating one's ultimate success in life: more important than social status, more important than professional status, and certainly more important than money.

Every year we listen to speakers at two different commencement exercises as they dispense advice to graduating students. Have we ever heard a speaker who lamented inadequate salary, inadequate social or professional status? Of course not. They wouldn't be a commencement speaker if they hadn't succeeded in those areas. Nevertheless, successful people looking back on their lives do have a familiar lament. It is that they have not spent enough time with their families or in service to their fellow human beings.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson said:

> To laugh often and love much; to win the respect of intelligent persons and the affection of children; to earn the approbation of honest citizens and to endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to give of one's self; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to have played and laughed with enthusiasm and sung with exultation; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived, this is to have succeeded.

ENDNOTES

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[3] Utah Commission on Volunteers, Transcripts of Focus Groups of Community Leaders, January 1997.

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[5] Goodwin, Robert K. (1996), "Inexplicably Bound To One Another," George W. Romney Keynote Address, Utah Conference On Volunteerism, Salt Lake City: Utah Commission on Volunteers, p. 3.

[6] See Stephen W. Littlejohn (1992), *Theories of Human Communication*, 4th Ed., Belmont, CA, Wadsworth.

[7] These criteria have been synthesized from The Alliance for Service-Learning in Education Reform (1993), *Standards of Quality for School-based Service-learning,* Vermont:SerVermont; and Shumer, et al. (1993), *Schools and Communities: Creating Places of Learning.*

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Conflict Resolution and Power for Public Relations

by

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Conflict Resolution and Power for Public Relations

The primary purpose in this study was to further explore how public relations managers gain power in organizations. The inclusion of public relations in an organization's dominant coalition is "perhaps more important to the profession of public relations than any other measure of professional growth," according to Broom and Dozier (1986, p. 8). J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) went even further in asserting that there is little justification for any practice of public relations unless practitioners are included in the dominant coalition. If the assertions of these and other scholars are well founded, then determining the relationship of conflict resolution and public relations in an organization -- specifically how practitioners can become part of the dominant coalition -- seems crucial.

This study explained that conflict resolution can empower public relations managers to become an effective part of the communication process in the management decision-making group or dominant coalition of an organization. The premise here is that methods of conflict resolution are used in J. Grunig's new model of symmetry as two-way practices (Dozier, L. Grunig, & J. Grunig, 1995) for public relations.

Significance of the Topic

Communication is the link of interaction between the organization and its publics, a situation of inevitable conflict (Coser, 1956; Follet, 1940; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Few practitioners or scholars of public relations have investigated the relationship between public relations and conflict resolution. From the practice of public relations, Gossen and Sharp (1987) saw public relations as the management of conflict with the objective of win/win solutions. Researchers who examined this relationship directly include Ehling (1984,1985), Lauzen (1986), and Murphy (1991). Ehling developed a theory of public relations management based on concepts from decision theory, game theory, and conflict resolution theory. Lauzen built on J.

Grunig and Hunt's (1984) four models of public relations -- press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical. She found that organizations use characteristics of all four models of public relations to manage conflict. Murphy described game theory as the science of conflict resolution. She urged symmetric compromise while never ignoring the asymmetric centrality of self-interest. The resulting practice of public relations would be one of mixed motives, where: "Each side retains a strong sense of its own interests, yet each is motivated to cooperate in a limited fashion in order to attain, at least, some resolution of the conflict" (Murphy, 1991).

The New Model

The most recent model of public relations, that incorporates the two-way models and mixed motives, is the new model of symmetry as two-way practices (Dozier, et al., 1995). This model is based on the Excellence Study, and research by Murphy (1991) using game theory to examine the two-way models. Her mixed motive game incorporates both asymmetrical and symmetrical tactics and argued that it better describes the practice of public relations in the real world. Again, in mixed motives organizations pursue their own interests while anticipating the reactions of their important publics.

The Excellence Study (J. Grunig et al., 1991) determined that excellent public relations has a "conflict mediation orientation and requires the establishment of two-way communication between an organization and its publics" (Carrington, 1992, p. 18). In connection with this same study, professional communicators concluded: "There is a shortage of communicators with mastery of the attitude, negotiation and conflict resolution theories vital to the win/win outcomes that CEOs of excellent organizations seek" (1992, p. 39). These are skills that top management values and supports and may lead to membership in the dominant coalition for the public relations manager.

Conflict Resolution

The use of conflict as a theoretical base to resolve problems in public relations is not new (Ehling, 1984; Gossen & Sharp, 1987; J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992; J. Grunig & Hickson, 1976; Pavlik, 1987; & Prior-Miller, 1989). In a recent content analysis of public relations firm-related articles in the Public Relations Journal from 1980 to 1989, 45 conflict-related issues were discovered. The key issues, attributed to either firm or client, were concerns over knowing each other's businesses, contributing to a consistent communication flow, finances, and chemistry (Bourland, 1993).

Communication skills developed by public relations seem vital to resolving conflict while communication and conflict seem to be endemic to organizations (Deutsch, 1973; Roloff, 1987). Communication can cause conflict, can be a symptom of conflict, and is effective for resolving conflicts (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991). Conflict, in communication terms, is the notion of perceived incompatibilities.

The resolution of conflict is a natural activity for public relations managers because the communication activities of public relations in an organization interrelate with communication activities in other organizations. Organizations are usually in some kind of conflict about their relationship with each other (Roloff, 1987). While public relations managers work for the interests of their own organizations, they may come to realize that other organizations have legitimate interests that should be considered in their relationship with each other.

The resolution of conflict by public relations in the business/public policy arena also is growing in demand (Gossen & Sharp, 1987). Conflicts are becoming more complex in more organizations and involve multiple issues as well. Handling such conflicts "enhance[s] the client's ability to function successfully in a volatile environment" (p. 35). In other words, more organizations have the potential for conflict that needs to be resolved than ever before. Skills are needed by public relations managers to evaluate the divergent interests of different groups to formulate alternatives that will satisfy the parties involved in the dispute. Otherwise, conflicts will keep arising until they are resolved.

Game theory originated the term mixed motives (Schelling, 1980). Schelling said there were conflicting as well as common interests in a dispute. One can win by bargaining, by mutual accommodation, or by avoidance of mutually damaging behavior. He called these types of games on a conflict/cooperation continuum, mixed motives.

The intersection then, of the fields of public relations and conflict resolution are mixed motives. Mixed motives acknowledge the primacy of the organization's interests and encompass the scale between two-way asymmetrical and two-symmetrical communication in public relations. This scale is described in both fields with such terms and tactics as: bargaining, negotiation, mediation, compromise, accommodation, avoidance, withdrawing, competition, contention, cooperation, and collaboration.

The most completely developed model using these types of terms was the dual concern model of Thomas (1976). He conceptualized two dimensions, one was concern for self and the other was concern for others. Within those two dimensions, Thomas described five negotiation tactics: competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance and accommodation.

Theoretically, this study overlaid the dual concern model from conflict resolution on the new model of symmetry for public relations. For the practice of public relations, this study attempted to make a connection between the use of mixed motives in solving problems for the organization and entrance into the dominant coalition of the organization.

Communication scholars have examined other theories to explain the movement of public relations into the dominant coalition of an organization, including structural, environmental-imperative and power-control theories. These theories, by themselves, have not completely explained public relations practitioners as effective strategic managers. The dominant coalition is that core group in management that sets the direction of the organization. The power-control theory will be revisited, in conjunction with the new model and conflict resolution since despite any other factor, power maintained by public relations would seem to be at the sufferance of the dominant coalition.

Many public relations theorists believe that of the four J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) models, the practice of the two-way symmetrical model would be characteristic of effective public relations managers and that those managers should be part of the dominant coalition. Ehling (1992) took this premise further, developing a theory of public relations as conflict management and asserting that only his equivalent of symmetrical communication management is really public relations. In fact, J. Grunig (1992b) provided strong links among public relations, the two-way models, conflict resolution, and access to the dominant coalition. Given those strong associations and Ehling's assertion, J. Grunig and L. Grunig (1992) suggested the next step to develop theory for the practice of public relations is to look at applying general theories of conflict resolution to the two-way models of public relations.

Conceptualization

The theoretical development of this study was limited to the concept of power, models of public relations and conflict resolution. The concept of power was used to more fully understand what was meant for public relations to become part of the dominant coalition. The four models of public relations introduced other factors that might possibly lead to entrance in the dominant coalition, then evolved into mixed motives and the new model of symmetry. Conflict resolution was discussed then, concluding with the development of a conflict resolution model for public relations. The power-control theory was considered in the final analysis, since that might be catalyst for power involving public relations.

Public Relations

Public relations is the "management of communication between an organization and its publics" (J. Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 6). The use of the words management, organization, and publics indicates a relationship of power and influence that can be investigated in this study.

Power gained by the public relations manager from resolving problems for an organization is related to what Salancik and Pfeffer (1989) called strategic-contingency theory, where one aspect of power is something that accrues to organizational departments that cope with organizational problems. They defined power as the ability to get things done. This can be interpreted to mean that power is the ability to solve problems.

Also, it has been suggested that power is not something that a person possesses, but is rather a relationship among people (Dahl, 1957). Pfeffer defined power as "context or relationship specific" (p. 3) and that a person is powerful "only with respect to other social actors in a specific social setting" (p. 3). Power, then, involves interactions among different players and the ability to employ some means to achieve an intended effect. Both of these conditions, the ability to solve problems and power as a relationship, point to the ability and process of exercising power instead of any importance attached to identifying sources of power (Mumby, 1988). Mumby maintained that power can perform an integrationist function as opposed to domination in an organization. Keltner (1994) called this the development of skills or services the dominant coalition deems critical to solving the organization's problems. Through this constant interplay of power, an organization constitutes and reconstitutes itself.

If, in the strategic-contingency theory, power is determined by problems facing the organization, it also influences decisions in the organization. Power, then, facilitates the organization's adaptation to its environment, or its problems (Mintzberg, 1983; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1989). L. Grunig (1992b) confirmed this conclusion when she said that if the dominant coalition is willing to share its power, it would be in a better position to manage its environmental dependencies.

Recent research on power in public relations has not focused on the relationship of problem-solving and power so its findings are inconclusive for purposes of this study. Pollack (1986) found moderate support for the public relations department and that the dominant coalition considered its function important. In the most extensive study of power in public relations, L. Grunig (1990) found almost unilateral support for public relations functions but also found that support and understanding do not necessarily equate with value. Most recently, the follow-up case studies to the Excellence Study (Dozier et al., 1995) found that:

> Excellent communication programs incorporate another dimension of power: the communicator's ability to influence decisions about an organization's goods and services, its policies, and its behavior. The communication department must have power and influence within the dominant coalition to help organizations practice the two-way symmetrical model. (p. 75)

The follow-up case studies showed that the power of the communication department is represented by the value and support that department receives from the dominant coalition. Much of this value and support for public relations managers can come from the use of skills attained from experience and training to resolve conflicts or problems with the organization's environment.

The Dominant Coalition. L. Grunig (1992b) followed her discussion of power with the conclusion that defining power is not enough. It is important also to understand the concept of coalitions within an organization that are the major power wielders. She used the term dominant coalition to identify the group of people who control an organization's resources. The most extensive definition of a coalition was "an interacting group of individuals , deliberately constructed, independent of the formal structure, lacking its own internal formal structure, consisting of mutually perceived memberships, issue oriented, focused on a goal or goals external to the coalition, and requiring concerted member action" (Stevenson, Pearce, & Porter, 1985, p. 261). These coalitions may be formed from members of upper management, or they may be a collection of people from other departments. Stevenson et al. stated that what makes them unique is their attempts to operate in a concerted manner outside of the formally constructed, legitimated structure" (p. 262). Mintzberg (1983) defined internal coalitions as those full-time employees that make decisions about the direction of the company and are able to take action on those decisions. Coalitions form "to protect and improve their vested interests" (Robbins, 1990, p. 250). Dozier et al. (1995) developed the concept further as: "the group of individuals within an organization with the power to affect the structure of the organization, define its mission, and set its course through strategic choices the coalition makes." Since public relations usually is not part of upper management (L. Grunig) then it follows that it is not part of the dominant coalition. Although the follow-up case studies did find that communicators may be part of the dominant coalition, this was not always the case. The first and basic research question, then, for this study was:

Are public relations managers typically part of the dominant coalition?

Gaining Power in an Organization

If public relations managers are not always part of the dominant coalition, then what are methods for those managers to gain power and move into the dominant coalition? One possible avenue is increased education. L. Grunig (1992b) stated, "the ability to make valid decisions in public relations depends partly on the knowledge of communication theory and research methods that comes with a university education in the field -- primarily a master's or doctoral student" (p. 498). Ehling (1992) supported this statement by concluding that "professionalism is dependent on a high level of sophistication presented through formal education" (p. 463).

Earlier in 1989, J. Grunig and L. Grunig found that, in general, managerial support for and understanding of public relations correlated with the most sophisticated, two-way models of public relations. Based primarily on Pollack's (1986) study, J. Grunig and L. Grunig posited that only those with the expertise to practice such a model would be included in the dominant coalition. They found significant correlations between inclusion in the dominant coalition and both education and experience in public relations. The relationship between the dominant coalition, and education and experience in public relations later evolved into the professional continuum of public relations (asymmetrical to symmetrical)(J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992). Gaining increased education specifically in the field of public relations aids the professional in public relations in giving him or her a body of knowledge to work from in designing and evaluating communications programs with their strategic publics (L. Grunig, 1992b).

Other factors of higher education include self-study, profession association workshops and seminars, mentoring, workshops for communications department, and professional accreditation for individuals (Dozier et al., 1995). Clearly, the existing literature on education in public relations shows that increased knowledge of the field adds to the practitioners ability and expertise.

The Dozier et al. (1995) follow-up case studies also mentioned knowledge of a specific business or industry. One highly successful communicator said not only that higher education played a key role in her success, but that she supplemented her broad training in communication with other course work in marketing and management . . . "with specialized training in a content area related to the business itself." (p. 70). In a study of 74 senior executives, Lindeman and Lapetina (1981) found that one of the weaknesses of public relations professionals is the lack of knowledge about business problems and lack of experience in business operations. Falb (1992) stated that: "Public relations is in fact moving in the direction of being a part of the management process. Therefore, it must be based on a knowledge of business and management practices" (p. 100). In a broader approach, Heath (1991) advocated that public relations programs incorporate both social sciences and humanities for conceptual depth, but also become closely aligned with business departments to include strategic business planning and technical disciplines. In the follow-up case studies Dozier et al., 1995 said that several communicators stressed the importance of business knowledge. "The top communicator at a chemical manufacturing company stressed the importance of knowing the chemical industry . . . " (p. 65). Clearly, knowledge of strategic business planning and management will aid the public relations practitioner in gaining support for his or her programs from senior management.

Yet additional knowledge about business practices is not the only contributing factor to public relations practitioners not being in the dominant coalition. Lack of professionalism and expertise in the field itself also contributes (L. Grunig, 1992b). When professionals in public relations do not have the expertise in their own field, it is difficult for them to persuade the dominant coalition to enact ill-conceived programs. Burger (1983) encouraged those in public relations to increase their level of professionalism by not only getting involved in the business that they are working for, but also by increasing the quality of work they produce.

Pfeffer (1981) stated that: "The power of organizational actors is fundamentally determined by two things, the importance of what they do in the organization and their skill in doing it" (p. 18). He postulates that people within an organization can have levels of expertise to solve organizational problems. It is, however, control of this knowledge that leads to power. There are several ways that individuals control this expertise. Those include lack of documentation, use of jargon within the field, centralization of expertise and knowledge, and maintaining control of external sources of expertise. These are all ways for an individual to maximize their power within an organization.

As public relations managers increase their level of expertise in the field, they will gain power in the organization. Commanding a field of specialized knowledge, practitioners will be able to come more indispensable to the organization. All of these three aspects, education, increased business knowledge and expertise in the field will result in additional power for the practitioner. All of which leads to the development of the next research question:

> *As public relations managers obtain education, expertise and experience in public relations and the business practices of an organization, do they gain entree' into the dominant coalition?*

Models of Public Relations

The two-way models of public relations already have been mentioned as factors of education and experience. In 1984, J. Grunig (J. Grunig & Hunt) devised four public relations models, the latter two being those in which two-way communication with strategic publics is essential: press agentry, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical.

Press agentry or publicity is one-directional from the organization to its publics. It seeks media attention in almost any way possible. Public information provides truthful and accurate information about the organization but does not volunteer negative information (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1989).

The two models most relevant for this study are the two-way asymmetric and the two-way symmetric. Both models involve formal and informal research. The two-way asymmetrical model has been defined as scientific persuasion, empirically seeking feedback from stakeholders so an organization can persuade its publics to its own views. The two-way symmetrical model is similar except its goal is to manage conflict and promote mutual understanding instead of persuasion to its own ends. Public relations professionals can negotiate solutions to conflicts between their organizations and strategic stakeholders (Dozier, et al., 1995). The two-way symmetrical model does not use the concept of feedback. Rather, it uses the concept of back and forth or two-way communication that is balanced and symmetrical. The reliability and validity of these models of public relations behavior have been established in a number of recent investigations (J. Grunig, 1983; Pollack, 1986; Schneider, aka L.A. Grunig, 1985).

As the four models of public relations evolved, J. Grunig (1989b) described the two-way symmetrical model as "public relations efforts which are based on research and evaluation and that use communication to manage conflict and to improve understanding with strategic publics" (p. 17). Note the introduction of the word conflict. Ehling (1992) asserted that public relations management can only realize this two-way model by making its primary mission that of attaining or maintaining accord between the organization and its stakeholders. However, to attain that accord requires a continual effort to mediate and mitigate conflict between the organization and its environment. This involves use of a unique communication system designed by the conflicting parties together and conducted so as to promote the two-way flow of information and organizational change.

Mixed Motives. Although the two-way symmetrical model would seem to be the ideal for conflict management (Ehling, 1984, 1985), it is difficult to determine the exact point for behavior on a continuous scale between two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric communication (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1992; Hellweg, 1989). Murphy (1991) and J. Grunig et al. (1991) suggested that a *mixed motive* version of the two-way symmetrical model might better describe what is happening in actual practice of public relations because it incorporates both asymmetrical and symmetrical tactics.

J. Grunig (1989a) defined symmetric communication as having "effects that a neutral observer would describe as benefitting both organization and publics. Organizations practicing two-way symmetrical public relations use bargaining, negotiation, and strategies of conflict resolution to bring about symbiotic changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behavior of both the organization and its publics" (p. 29). Although more recent studies showed more use of the two-way symmetrical model (L. Grunig, Dozier, & J. Grunig, 1994; Rawlins, 1993), those studies acknowledged the more frequently practiced model is the one termed *mixed motives*. Murphy (1991) drew the term *mixed motives* from *game theory*, another theoretical approach to conflict resolution.

Murphy (1991) said that each side in a stakeholder relationship retains a strong sense of its own self-interests, yet each is motivated to cooperate in a limited fashion to attain at least some resolution of the conflict. The task in a mixed motive game is to find a balance. Game theorists define equilibrium as a balance between the player's interests so that neither would regret his or her action given what the other player chose to do. True equilibria offer stable solutions to conflict because they lock in benefits and penalties so that neither side could defect from the agreement without causing the other player to also defect, thereby hurting each player's cause. In this sense, mixed motive equilibria do reduce conflict and support the hypothesis that "asymmetrical public relations would increase (and symmetrical public relations decrease) the amount, intensity, and duration of . . . conflict" (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1989, p. 58).

Parties in a conflict, an organization and its strategic publics, act as cooperative antagonists. They may be on opposite sides of an issue but it is in their best interests to cooperate with each other: "They do not trust each other, nor do they believe everything communicated by the other side. However, they do trust each other enough to believe that each will abide by any agreement reached" (Dozier et al., 1995).

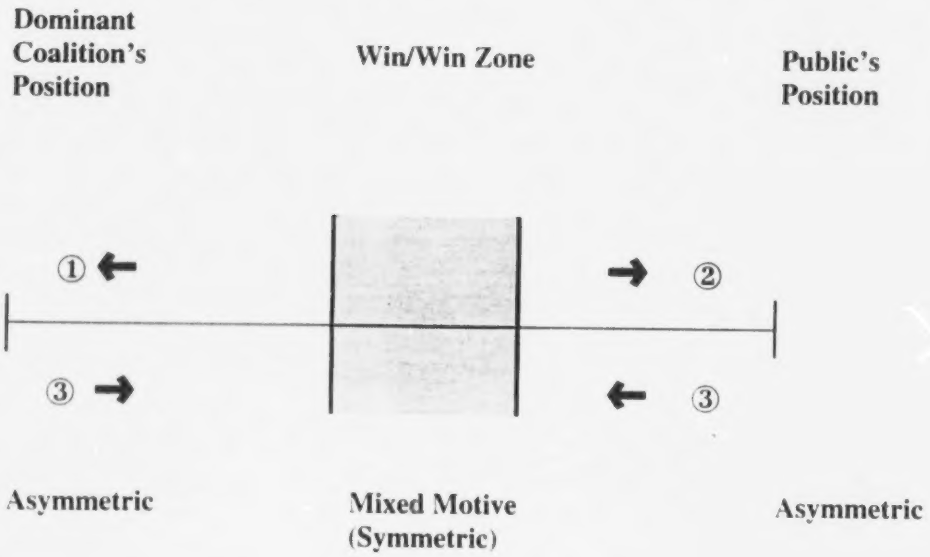
Ehling's (1985) view of public relations as the application of scientific decision-making techniques to the mediation of conflict resembles the result of using mixed motives to resolve problems for the organization. This mediation of conflict is perhaps the central and definitive task of public relations. He asserted that "cooperation and conflict exhaust the ways in which one individual can affect the expected relative values of another" (p. 12), and he defined a public relations situation specifically as "a choice situation" characterized by "decisions . . . about continuation or discontinuation of actual or potential conflicts and about the communicative means to be used in conflict resolution" (p. 16).

The New Model of Symmetry. Based on the Excellence Study, Dozier, et al. (1995) suggested a new way of organizing the model of two-way communication practices that incorporates mixed motives (Figure 1). In the clear areas outside the win/win zone, organizations and publics are seen as having separate interests. In the win/win, shaded zone are conflicting interests. Within the win/win zone, negotiation and compromise work to find common ground between the parties in the conflict. Arrows 1 and 2 show either the organization or the public persuading the other party to their respective positions in asymmetrical communication. Arrow 3 represents public relations people as mediators trying to move the positions of the organization and its publics toward each other. At the one extreme two-way asymmetrical organizations have incentives to contend with their strategic publics. They attempt to persuade these publics because they perceive they can win in a conflict while the publics lose (using game theory terms). At the other extreme of Figure 1, two-way symmetrical, organizations have incentives to cooperate with their strategic publics. They find a way where both sides can win in conflicts with their publics (Dozier et al.). The authors dubbed this model two-way, subsuming the former two-way asymmetrical and two-way symmetrical models. By doing so, they did not exclude the use of asymmetrical means to achieve symmetrical ends. They said: "Asymmetrical tactics are sometimes used to gain the best position for organizations within the win/win zone. Because such practices are bounded by a symmetrical world view that respects the integrity of long-term relationships, the two-way model is essentially symmetrical" (p. 49).

A definition of public relations as a mixed motive game helps reconcile the divergent asymmetric versus symmetric models. Mixed motive games provide a broad third category that describes behavior as most public relations people experience it (L. Grunig, Dozier, & J. Grunig, 1994): a multi-directional scale of competition and cooperation in which organizational needs must be balanced against constituents' needs, but never lose their primacy. Researchers have shown that most organizations appear to practice a blend of the three asymmetric models of public relations, as well as symmetric communication styles (J. Grunig & L. Grunig, 1989).

Figure 1

New Model of Symmetry as Two-Way Practices


Dominant Coalition's Position
Win/Win Zone
Public's Position
①
②
③
③
Asymmetric
Mixed Motive (Symmetric)
Asymmetric

NOTE: Adapted from D.M. Dozier, L.A. Grunig, & J. Grunig. (1995). Manager's guide to excellence in public relations and communication management (p. 48). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

The third research question for this study, then, would be:

Do knowledge and experience in solving problems of public relations include the new model of symmetry as two-way practices and mixed motives?

Conflict Resolution

Conflict. Within a public relations context, conflict is the perceived divergence of interests between or among parties that have consequences for each other. The term interests as Fisher and Ury (1981) used it denotes underlying values or more broadly held positions as opposed to overt stances or more surface held positions. The aspect of "consequences for each other" from the definition might be assumed since it does say there are differing interests among parties. That statement, however, would not matter much if there were no effect of one party on another.

J. Grunig and Hunt (1984) used the term stakeholders to indicate those parties that have consequences, pro or con, on an organization. Freeman (1984) spoke of parties that have an effect or are affected by the objective, goals, and mission of an organization. The concept of stakeholders is important to conflict and conflict resolution because it names those types of parties that fit into the mixed motives of Schelling (1980) and Murphy (1991). If pure competition has parties to a conflict that are opponents and pure coordination has parties that could be labeled partners, then what are those parties labeled who are in between, along the conflict to cooperation spectrum (Schelling, 1985)? Those parties should be labeled as stakeholders, groups that have consequences for and affect other parties of the organization. Most of the time, they are not in complete opposition nor do they act in total favor toward a particular organization.

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In 1964 Blake, Shepard, and Mouton began to formalize an approach to conflict as they outlined five ways of dealing with conflict: withdrawing of one party or the other, smoothing over differences causing the conflict, forcing a win/lose settlement, and forming a compromise. The problem with these first four methods, however, was the likelihood that conflict would reoccur, except in the possible case of total withdrawal. This is the definition of conflict settlement, where a conflict is resolved through coercion or force, but not completely resolved from the perspective of the losing party. Conflict resolution would be on the opposite end of a continuum from conflict settlement. Blake, Shepard, and Mouton described their fifth model, problem-solving or complete conflict resolution, as the mutual satisfaction of both parties.

Fisher and Ury (1981) developed a model for maintaining good relations with an opponent without necessarily yielding on the issues at stake. Rejecting previous approaches as either rigidly competitive or naively cooperative, the two authors set forth a fourfold approach: (a) separate the people from the problem (be tough or hard on the issues but soft or cooperative on the people); (b) focus on interests, not positions; © invent options for mutual gain; and, (d) insist on using objective criteria to judge solutions. Their work has been criticized as being too naive itself. It leaves out the historical perspective of past relations between parties and in practice only seems to work if both sides are educated negotiators.

Within Blake, Shepard, and Mouton's (1964) five methods of dealing with conflict and Fisher and Ury's (1981) four-step negotiation process are the beginnings of a conflict resolution model to examine more in-depth the new model of symmetry. The most complete version of these models is, perhaps, found in Thomas' (1976) dual concern model.

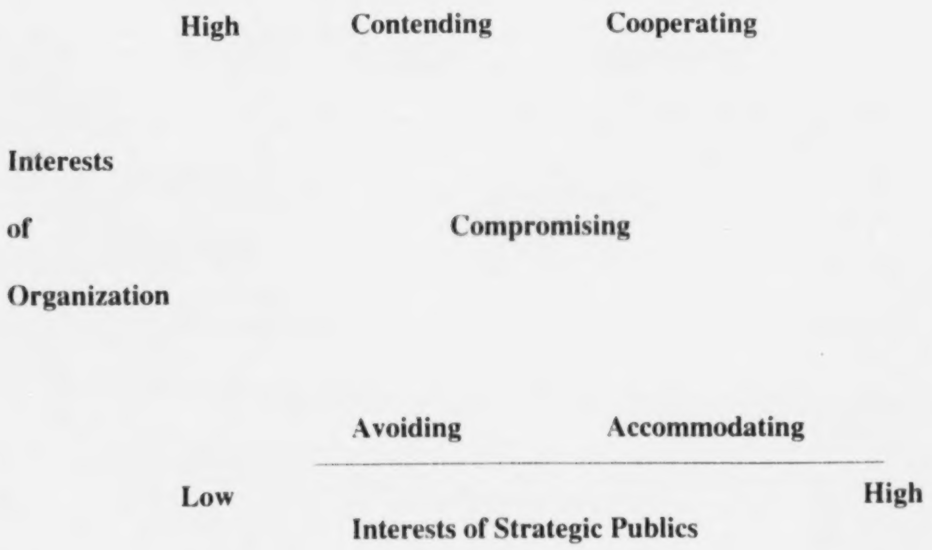
Creating a Model. The evaluation of the mixed motive spectrum and the creation of a new model involves the two-way models of public relations and conflict resolution theory. It will serve to delineate and expand the two-way models to more accurately describe the real practice of public relations. Such a model also will pinpoint more precisely reasons for public relations managers to become members of the dominant coalition.

The dual concern model, developed most completely by Thomas (1976), is conceptualized as two dimensions, concern for self and concern for others. Thomas then distinguished five negotiation tactics that would fall at points on this conflict grid. The five points he described were competition, collaboration, compromise, avoidance, and accommodation. Competition is high concern for self and low concern for others. Collaboration is high concern for self and high concern for others. Compromise is medium concern for self and medium concern for others. Avoidance is low concern for self and low concern for others. Accommodation is low concern for self and high concern for others. It should be noted that this model that evolved for this study served only as a base from which to develop further the new model of symmetry as two-way practices. The study itself expanded on the applicability of either the conflict resolution model of public relations that is described next or the new model of symmetry as two-way practices.

The one dimension satisfies the organization's interests, which I will label as contending. This represents the extreme asymmetrical ends of the new model of symmetry as two-way practices (Dozier et al., 1995). The other dimension satisfies the interests of others, what I choose to label cooperation, representing the extreme symmetrical middle of the new model of symmetry as two-way practices. In this two-dimensional conflict management model adapted from Thomas (1976) in Figure 2 are five ways to settle or resolve conflict: contending (high, low), avoiding (low, low), compromising (moderate, moderate), accommodating (low, high), and cooperating (high, high).

Figure 2

Conflict Resolution Model for Public Relations


High
Contending
Cooperating
Interests
of
Organization
Compromising
Avoiding
Accommodating
Low
High
Interests of Strategic Publics

The five categories above are:

1. Contending -- one party forces its position on another party.
2. Cooperating -- both parties work together to reconcile basic interests, a mutually beneficial solution.
3. Compromising -- both parties meet part way between their preferred positions.
4. Avoiding -- one or the other party leaves the conflict either physically or psychologically.
5. Accommodating -- one party yields in part on its position and lowers its aspirations.

It was my premise in this study that the new model of symmetry as two-way practices (Dozier et al., 1995) could be verified and further explained by these five categories.

As a result of the development of this model, the fifth research question would be:

> *Do knowledge and experience in public relations include the conflict resolution model for public relations and apply to its membership in the dominant coalition?*

Power-Control Theory

All of the previous research questions may not be enough to answer the abiding question of this study: How do public relations managers increase their power in organizations? L. Grunig (1990) and J. Grunig (1989a) found weak and inconsistent relations among their studies of an organization's structure, its environment, and models of public relations it practices. (L. Grunig studied 48 organizations in the Washington, D.C. area [Schneider, aka L. Grunig, 1985].) By implication this weak relationship could be extended to the new conflict resolution model for public relations. The reason for this is that stakeholder environments are not objective reality for managers of organizations. Instead, managers choose, subjectively, to observe only parts of their environments. The parts they choose to observe are a product of their mind set and organizational culture (L. Grunig, 1992a). This is the power-control theory.

A power-control theory (Child, 1972; Pfeffer, 1981) may explain more completely the relationships between organizational environment and the two-way models. In 1963, Cyert and March presented a theory in which there is a coalition of individuals who determine the organization's goals. Stevenson et al. (1985) in their work on coalitions stated: "Coalitions are formed to advance the purposes of their members" (p. 262). Members of the power elite also attempt to select the environments that will help them maintain their control over the direction of the organization. For public relations to be a part of the dominant coalition, the members must view public relations as helping to maintain that control.

In any case, the dominant coalition has the power to choose the model of public relations the organization practices. L. Grunig (1992a) found statistically significant support for a relationship between the dominant coalition and the practice of public relations. This does not mean membership in the dominant coalition. Since it has been established already that public relations managers are rarely part of the dominant coalition, it would take a radical change in the organization to include them. Under the power control theory, the rise of the public relations professional to power, including entry into the dominant coalition, is blocked by the desire of the coalition to protect its own interests and deny change in the organization.

The final research question for this study, then, is:

> *Despite the recognition given the performance of the public relations manager or any other factor affecting that manager, does entry into the dominant coalition depend entirely on the agenda of the dominant coalition?*

Methods

The qualitative method was the preferred method for this study because it seeks to interpret and understand the meaning of interpersonal attitudes and behavior among the public relations manager, external publics, and the top management or dominant coalition of an organization. This study used a combination of depth interviewing and case studies.

Interviewing

Interviews are conversations with a purpose (Kahn & Cannell, 1957), rather than a formal set of structured questions. The interview respects how the interviewee frames and structures responses. This type of qualitative interviewing is known as depth, long, intensive, collaborative, informal, semi-structured, and unstructured (Lindlof, 1995; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; McCracken, 1988; Patton, 1990). The voluntary character of the interview process is vital so that the interaction between researcher and participant occurs as freely as interviewing (possible strangers) can permit. The whole interviewing process leads to a view of something between (inter) people (Brenner, 1985). Lindlof (1995) made the point that even though a researcher wants to cover certain areas going into an interview, relatively little structure is involved.

Case Studies

In 1994, Yin defined a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). Multiple case designs are almost always advisable (Yin, 1989).

When collecting evidence in case studies, it typically comes from six sources -- documents (letters, meeting minutes, internal documents, news clippings that help corroborate evidence from other, primary sources); archival records (maps, lists, surveys, diaries, organizational charts or records); interviews (one of most important information sources for case studies, includes in-depth open ended interviews, focused interviews or focus groups for clarification of evidence, or survey interviews); direct observation (site visit to observe environmental conditions and relevant behaviors, using multiple observers if possible and taking extensive field notes); participant observation (observer becomes active member of community and when researcher wants to perceive reality as an insider, but subject to biases of involvement); and physical artifacts (computer printout, tool, work of art, and other physical evidence) (Yin, 1989).

One strength of case studies arises out of a necessity to understand complex social phenomena. Stake (1994) said that case studies actually were not a methodological choice but a choice of the object to be studied, the natural setting to be explored. They are the preferred strategy when how or why questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is to explain a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 1994). Another strength of case studies is its use of triangulation. Triangulation in the case study sense is a process of multiple perceptions gathered from the multiple sources of data and a comparison of them to clarify meaning (Flick, 1992).

A strength and a weakness of case studies is generalizability. Case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. Cases do not represent a scientific random sample where any of a given population are likely to be chosen. The goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) rather than generalize frequencies (statistical generalization) (Yin, 1989).

Procedures

Interviewing. For the interviewing portion of the study, the interview guide approach of Lindlof (1995) and Patton (1990) was adopted. The interview guide approach uses elements of the semi-structured and unstructured interviewing techniques. Semi-structured interviewing calls for a specific list of questions, given in a specific order, while unstructured interviewing is completely open-ended, allowing the participants to lead the conversation where they will.

An interview guide creates a menu of questions to be covered and leaves the exact order and articulation to the interviewer's discretion. Of course, all questions were asked of all participants in roughly the same way. There exists, however, flexibility for the interviewer to ask optional questions, pass on others, and depart briefly to follow unexpected conversational paths. Experiences and background vary among participants and the interviewer should have the discretion to reshuffle questions to pursue issues relevant to the moment or new issues altogether (Lindlof, 1995). In essence, the interview guide approach emphasizes the goals of the interview in terms of the research questions to be explored and the criteria of a relevant and adequate response (Gorden, 1969).

Specific questions in the interview guide of this study were adapted to either the public relations participant or the dominant coalition participant in each organization. The interviews were conducted with a representative of the dominant coalition familiar with the public relations function, the head of public relations, and sometimes another member of the public relations department in 14 organizations. A total of 30 interviews were conducted. In the 10 companies where interviews only were conducted, anonymity was guaranteed. Full case studies were conducted in the other four organizations, to include at least three of the six methods of data collection for each case. Anonymity was not guaranteed for the case studies. One company was United Defense, one of the country's largest defense contractors. Another was Deloitte & Touche, a Big 6 accounting firm. A third was Radius Inc., a high technology firm and the last was Oracle Corporation, the second-ranked company (at the time) behind Microsoft in the computer industry. All of the case studies were conducted in the Fall of 1994.

For the interviews alone, a varied (on the excellence scale) and purposive sample was used across industry types. A cosmetics firm and an experiment station classified as excellent in the excellence study were chosen. Four of the firms, a city government and three associations, were not classified as excellent in the study. While four of the other companies did not participate in the excellence study at all. They were a drug company; a holding firm that owned a bank, autodealerships and a sports franchise; a spice company; and a hi-tech corporation. Interviewing began in April 1994 with four companies in Texas. A second round of interviewing occurred in July with another four firms in the Washington, D.C., area. The final two organizations were interviewed in November 1994 in the San Francisco Bay area of California.

Data Analysis

A combined method of interpretive analysis was used based on the in-depth interview method of Marshall and Rossman (1989), the long interview method of McCracken, (1988), the case study methods of Yin (1989) and Bogdan and Biklen (1992), and the analysis techniques of Miles and Huberman (1984). To capitalize on the advantages of these approaches yet control for inherent disadvantages, six steps were used:

1. Key issues and recurrent events in the individual interviews or cases.
2. Comparison of dominant coalition participants to each other in search of patterns.
3. Comparison of public relations participants across companies for patterns or themes.
4. Comparison of patterns between the dominant coalition and public relations participants.
5. After the data were gathered and patterns seemed to emerge, I searched for alternative explanations -- to challenge the very patterns that seem so evident or obvious.
6. After patterns developed, then in conclusion compare findings back to theory to establish or discredit the specific model developed from theory.

As can be seen from these six stages of analysis, there usually are no fixed formulas for analysis of data in qualitative research methods. The process consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address initial propositions of study. To do this, the researcher needs an analytic strategy that relies on theoretical propositions as guides.

The primary analytic strategy emphasized here was pattern-matching. According to Yin (1989) this analysis of data consists of comparing empirically based patterns with a predicted one -- if something was thought to predict something else, and that something else did occur, and alternative explanations could not be found, then outcome matched prediction.

Most importantly, the method focused on the research questions while examining relationships and preparing templates for matches in the research data (McCracken, 1988, p. 33). As already stated, even though a preliminary pattern-matching template may be considered, the interviewer also should be adaptive and flexible to follow responses that may not fit the research questions and theory behind them.

Findings

Returning to the original research questions as a frame of reference, the first question was:

Are public relations managers typically part of the dominant coalition?

The predominant pattern for this study was that the senior public relations person often belonged to the dominant coalition. Of the 14 organizations involved in the study, 12 of the dominant coalition representatives agreed while the holding company in Texas and Radius, Inc. did not. Among public relations managers, 10 of the 14 said they belonged to the dominant coalition.

At Deloitte & Touche, the dominant coalition likened the role of the public relations manager to a local partner. She was involved in partner meetings in the San Jose office and was viewed as the expert on marketing and client issues. In the case of United Defense, the director of communications did not consider himself part of the dominant coalition. Yet, he defined his role as autonomous and as part of the executive operating committee which set policy for the company.

The second research question dealt with the overall ability of the public relations manager:

> *As public relations managers obtain education, expertise and experience in public relations and the business practices of an organization, do they gain entree' into the dominant coalition?*

This question spilled over into the two-way models and conflict resolution tactics because some of the education and experience covered these topics. All the organizations agreed with this question, except Radius, Inc. where it broke out education and expertise from general business experience with the organization. There were no examples found at Radius where education and expertise were brought to the attention of the dominant coalition. However, regarding business practices, it did find that the nature of high tech public relations requires a solid understanding of many complex disciplines, possibly including applications, operating systems, hardware engineering and microprocessor design. Oracle and Deloitte & Touche also added the issue of personality, people skills to get along with both strategic stakeholders and the dominant coalition criteria for membership in the coalition.

From the perspective of the dominant coalition, then, membership in that group depended largely on the background of the practitioner. Public relations managers saw that membership in the dominant coalition hinged on their ability and expertise to resolve problems for the organization. In this category the patterns revealed the most disparity between the dominant coalition and public relations. The broader importance of background to the dominant coalition was a wider consideration of the expertise to solve problems from the public relations managers' viewpoint. Background included native ability, knowledge, experience and sound judgement. All these factors contributed to a relationship of trust between the dominant coalition and public relations built over the long-term.

This pattern of background incorporated the public relations managers' focus on experience as expertise to solve problems for the organization. Another common factor of dominant coalitions was the long-term relationship both with the exposure to issues and to the dominant coalition. This was labeled by the product-related association as accumulation. This accumulation encompassed the personal chemistry and trust engendered with the CEO over the time. In the spice company, the public relations manager saw the building of relationships, not only with the dominant coalition but with strategic publics, as vital to resolving management communication problems for the organization. This building of relationships also contributed greatly to creating the common ground for the solution of problems through mixed motives and conflict resolution tactics.

The third major finding in this study encompassed the third and fourth research questions:

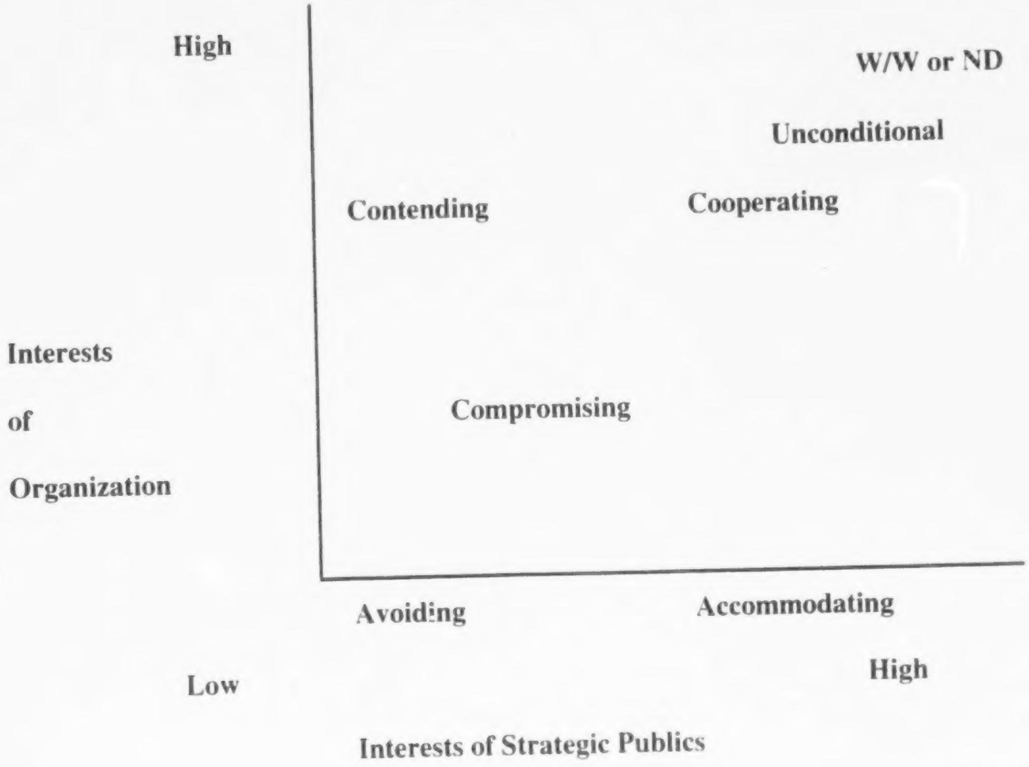
> *Do knowledge and experience in solving problems of public relations include the new model of symmetry as two-way practices and mixed motives?*
>
> *Do knowledge and experience in public relations include the conflict resolution model for public relations and apply to its membership in the dominant coalition?*

Public relations among the 14 organizations was, for the most part, a two-way practice. This practice encompassed mixed motives, that is the five negotiation tactics plus unconditionally constructive and win/win or no deal (Figure 3). Being unconditionally constructive is a unilateral approach that probably will fall in the win/win zone of the new model of symmetry. The win/win or no deal perspective is a forced or contending approach to mutual collaboration. In some instances, participants in this study used both unconditionally constructive and win/win or no deal as benignly asymmetrical tactics to gain a symmetrical result.

In a way, win/win or no deal is a positive ultimatum stating that one party's walk-away alternative or avoidance is better unless both parties cooperate in a conflict situation. Neither party will regret its decision later if it chooses to cooperate but if it chooses not to cooperate it will regret any other contention, accommodation, or compromise solution. The only other alternative, then, is to choose no deal. The development of the conflict may evolve in the future and the parties could then renegotiate as strategic publics for each other when their walk-away alternatives are no longer better for avoidance than for cooperation.

Figure 3

Two-Way Conflict Resolution Model for Public Relations


High
W/W or ND
Unconditional
Contending
Cooperating
Interests
of
Organization
Compromising
Avoiding
Accommodating
Low
High
Interests of Strategic Publics

When the interests of the organization are not of great importance or low, it can either avoid or accommodate on the public relations problem. The organization can afford to avoid the problem if the interests of its strategic publics are low or if its walk-away alternative is higher. If the interests of the strategic public are high and have consequences for the organization, the organization cannot ignore its public and must accommodate. It gives in to the strategic public because its interests are low and the organization has nothing to lose.

The position of being *unconditionally constructive*, that was found and labeled as such in this study, is where both parties have high interests and high consequences for each other. But, for some reason, one party will not agree or even negotiate. The organization then chooses, even though there has been a two-way exchange, to do what it believes is the best course of action for the relationship between both parties. Yet this is done without the other party agreeing to the solution. It is supposed to be mutually beneficial. It is a positive relationship and that is why it is shown above cooperation on the right side of Figure 3. The grave danger in this situation is that the solution to the problem is not really mutually beneficial and the result falls back to the contending category of two-way asymmetrical communication. If this happens, then the situation is no longer unconditionally constructive for the benefit of the relationship between the parties.

Even further on the scale of high interest to both parties in the dispute is *win/win or no deal*. It is shown above cooperation and unconditionally constructive on the right side of Figure 3. Both parties have strong interests, both can benefit from the solution, and they have other alternatives to choose from (mostly accommodation or compromise). At least one party, however, has a better walk-away alternative for all the negotiation tactics except win/win. The choice of alternatives, then, is either win/win or no deal at all.

Again, all of these tactics in this study led to resolving problems in the environment with strategic stakeholders and helped public relations managers to participate as members of the dominant coalition for their organizations.

The final and overriding research question for this study was:

> *Despite the recognition given the performance of the public relations manager or any other factor affecting that manager, does entry into the dominant coalition depend entirely on the agenda of the dominant coalition?*

All members of the dominant coalitions and the public relation managers who participated in the study thought the dominant coalition had a major effect on the practice of public relations in their organizations. The one possible exception was the dominant coalition representative for the spice company. She said the overall culture of the company was the deciding factor. Yet, that culture had been established by a CEO as early as 1932.

It was the opinion of one public relations manager at United Defense that business knowledge and expertise in the field were the keys to admittance to the dominant coalition. Yet, the director of communications at the same company, who was established as a partial member of the dominant coalition, said it would take the CEO/President to include him before he would be a full member. Although the public relations manager was considered part of dominant coalition at Oracle, the interviewees made a distinction that even in that position it is still up to the dominant coalition for acceptance. Deloitte & Touche reiterated that view, that after all else is considered, it was the CEOs personal belief that directors should be part of the dominant coalition that allowed the public relations manager to be there. Both Oracle and Deloitte & Touche emphasized the role personalities played in entrance to the dominant coalition. These firms argued that a person must demonstrate personal compatibility and interpersonal skills with other members of the dominant coalition, relating back to the pattern of education and expertise.

Although there was a pattern of definite influence by the dominant coalition, that power-control was not necessarily personal or asymmetrical. Several dominant coalition participants said that most CEOs who set the agenda do so for professional goals rather than personal ones. The member of the dominant coalition from the experiment station said: "It is not personality-driven. The CEO wants to see the program thrive and be recognized. He doesn't do it for the money or the title. He does it for fulfillment and to do a good job." Notice the term fulfillment. Even though the dominant coalition made a case for professional goals, it is difficult to separate them from personal goals.

Other dominant coalition participants returned to the pattern of unconditionally constructive in describing their approach of "doing a good job for the public good," which led to the term of benignly asymmetrical. The trend among dominant coalition participants was to approach problems in a symmetrical manner even if they had to accomplish that goal asymmetrically. The asymmetrical model implies manipulating its strategic publics for the good of the organization. Benignly asymmetrical is an unconditionally constructive stance where the organization may be manipulating its strategic publics but it is for the good of the relationship.

The public relations managers were concerned more with the long-term level of trust with the dominant coalition than the model of public relations practice. Even those public relations managers who preferred two-way symmetrical communication said that if the dominant coalition wanted asymmetrical public relations, it would get that type of public relations. In one instance of dominant coalition influence, the practice of public relations in the cosmetics firm was still driven by the former president of the company. He favored two-way communication.

Conclusions

How did these findings then support or fail to support the research questions determined by the current state of the fields of public relations and conflict resolution? How should these research questions be altered or changed? What really emerged from the patterns in this study?

The four major patterns found in this study of 14 organizations revolved around the models of public relations and the dominant coalition. From the perspective of both the dominant coalition and public relations, mixed motive public relations applies. They used all five of the negotiation tactics plus what Fisher and Brown (1988), termed as unconditionally constructive and what Covey (1989) called win/win or no deal. Second, the knowledge, experience, and expertise gained from practicing mixed motive public relations enabled public relations managers to solve problems. Finally, in spite of all of this expertise and ability, it still remained up to the dominant coalition to give power to public relations and allow it into the coalition.

Implications for Current Practice and Theory

These findings affected the practical and theoretical confluence of the two-way models and negotiation tactics; and the power control theory as it relates to membership by public relations in the dominant coalition.

Two-Way Models and Conflict Resolution Tactics.

This study revealed that two-way communication and negotiation tactics are inextricably intertwined and leads to the following concluding statement:.

> Public relations will become a part of the dominant coalition if it has knowledge and experience in the mixed motives of the two-way model of public relations to include the negotiation processes of contention, avoidance, compromise, accommodation, cooperation, unconditionally constructive, and win/win or no deal.

At any time informal or formal research is conducted to determine overt positions and underlying interests of strategic publics that have an effect on an organization, communication tactics are required for the organization to deal with those publics. This study has shown that conflict resolution tactics are an integral part of those communication strategies. Ehling (1987a) described such activities to be in the public relations jurisdiction if they entailed the strategic means and ends of public relations. Strategic means entail communication and conflict resolution strategies. The "strategic end-state of public relations management is to achieve a non-conflict state via the means of a well-designed communication system" (p. 29). The mixed motives result at the strategic level seems to satisfy Ehling's requirement for "selecting courses of action which will allow an organization to survive, grow and prosper in some way over a long period of time" (Ehling, 1987b, p. 7).

Mixed Motives. As Dozier et al. (1995) stated, the combination of asymmetrical and symmetrical tactics seemed paradoxical when examining their two extremes superficially. Dozier explained the dilemma by subordinating asymmetrical to symmetrical practices. Short-term tactical advantages may be gained through two-way asymmetrical practices between parties in a mixed motive game. Yet, for long-term integrity of the game and for parties to maintain continuous relationships over the long-term, cooperative tactics should be employed to maintain the integrity of binding joint agreements that both sides believe the other will respect.

The long-term relationship revealed in this study was the trust developed between the dominant coalition and the public relations manager to allow the public relations manager to solve problems for the organization. This long-term relationship was a part of the judgement and trust condition that allowed a public relations manager to become part of the dominant coalition. The solution of problems ranged from the asymmetrical to the symmetrical in a mixed motive pattern. One was not subordinate to the other but rather combined elements of both in concurrent usage. As the director of corporate communications said for the holding company in this study, "Wire both ends against the middle." When considering the organization's best interests, *contend* if the organization can win but *cooperate* at the same time to solidify long-term relationships with strategic publics and hedge against negative consequences for the future. To contend may or may not be unconditionally constructive based on the long-term good for the relationship between parties. A specific question regarding this short-term versus long-term usage of negotiation tactics would be a useful direction for future studies.

In the Excellence Study (J. Grunig, 1992b), the public relations department's knowledge of two-way symmetrical practices ranked second to manager role expertise and knowledge of two-way asymmetrical practice ranked third as indicators of communication excellence. Earlier, Murphy (1991) connected these second- and third-ranked factors and dubbed their coexistence as mixed motives, borrowing the term from game theory. In mixed motives, both parties can still pursue their own self-interests. Organizations and their strategic publics can be both selfish or contending, and cooperative. This leads the parties to engage in problem solving to reconcile their overlapping interests (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). Dozier et al. (1995) used the term cooperative antagonists. Besides that, the parties are cooperative protagonists in the struggle to satisfy their own interests with the knowledge that satisfaction is best accomplished through satisfying each other's interests as well. The question is not one of mixed motives where short-term asymmetrical tactics are combined with long-term symmetrical tactics as advocated by Dozier et al. (1995), but rather one of discovering the priority-level of importance for the common interests of the strategic parties.

Unconditionally Constructive. Related to the negotiation of underlying interests in this study was the problem of what to do when the opposing party refused to come to agreement when both parties used cooperative tactics. The alternative action for getting around this stalemate was that negotiating tactic of being unconditionally constructive. Being unconditionally constructive was used in the positive sense of Fisher and Brown (1988). That is, guidelines that "will be both good for the relationship and good for me, whether or not you follow the same guidelines" (p. 37). Even if the other party in the conflict does not reciprocate, the organization acts in reconciling the strategic interests of both the organization and its strategic public. Even though the decision to take this altruistic tactic is unilateral, it remains two-way because the organization must have done research to determine the interests of its strategic public. It also is a win/win situation because both parties mutually benefit from the result of the tactic. Even though the strategic public does not have a choice in the decision and may already regret that decision, it will tend to be better off. This is so just as the organization is better off than if it were to pursue another negotiation tactic with different choice alternatives. The key lies in both parties' common interests. One party cannot be unconditionally constructive if the interests of the other party are not affected positively. Those common interests allow for a limited set of options to be unconditionally constructive (personal communication, Schelling, November 8, 1995).

Win/Win or No Deal. This alternative negotiation tactic arose from interviews with a CEO and a public relations manager from different companies. Although not a major pattern in the study it seemed to develop as an alternative beyond unconditionally constructive to avoid stalemate in a negotiation. To get past a stalemate in a positive way for both parties, at least one party's best alternative to a negotiated agreement, was the option of no deal at all. The only options in this situation were for either both parties to collaborate in mutually beneficial circumstances or to hold off on any agreement until both parties were ready for a win/win deal to be struck. In conflict resolution terms, such a situation is called ripeness.

In 1989, Covey adapted the game theory terms of Deutsch (1973) into what he called "six paradigms of human interaction." The first five are covered essentially in the five tactics of negotiation for public relations outlined in the Conceptualization for this study. Two participants in this study did not mention these first five but instead emphasized directly the sixth paradigm, win/win or no deal. Covey said, "If these individuals had not come up with a synergistic solution -- one that is agreeable to both -- they could have gone for an even higher expression of Win/Win -- Win/Win or no deal" (p. 213). The no deal addition to the term win/win means that if the parties cannot find a solution that would benefit both, then they would agree to disagree -- no deal. At least one party wants a win and wants the other party to win, too. The only alternative, Covey said: "It would be better not to deal than to live with a decision that wasn't right for us both. Then maybe another time we might be able to get together" (p. 214). With no deal as a viable alternative to a dispute, then the participants in this study could use it to resolve their problems.

Unconditionally constructive and win/win or no deal are alternatives that were used by participants in this study to get past a stalemate on the way to resolving problems. There are a number of models of the dynamic process of conflict resolution. They consist of various stages, from emergence to contention, escalation, de-escalation, and, finally, resolution. One stage of these models is usually stalemate, where neither party can progress toward a resolution of the conflict. Usually this stalemate involves power and contending tactics by the parties in the dispute. In this study, however, the stalemate is viewed positively. The opposing sides give up on cooperative problem solving for the time being until the conflict is ripe for resolution. The conflict must evolve to the point where the parties are willing and able to find a solution that integrates their interests. Mitchell (1981) referred to this starting point for ending a conflict as one of perceived success, a mutual desire from both sides to come out of the conflict in a better situation than they entered it. Once this state is achieved for both sides then they can engage in problem solving, or find a solution that integrates their underlying interests.

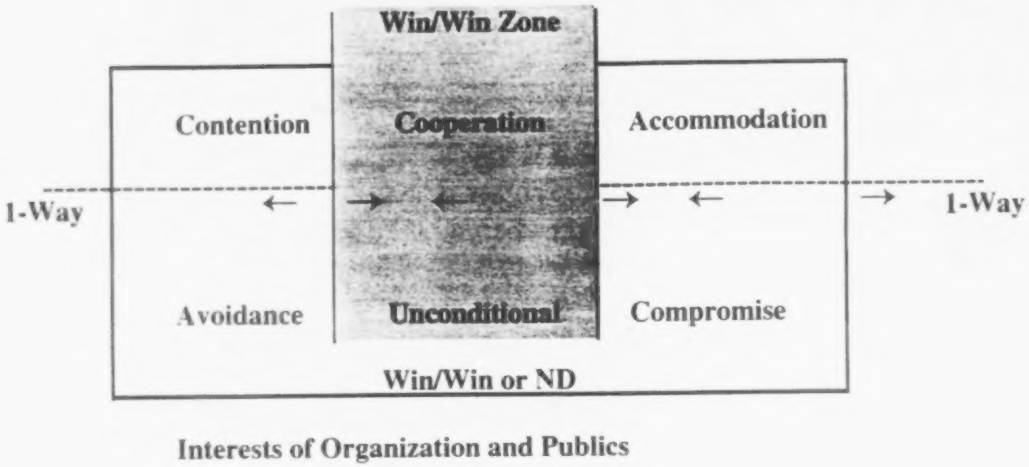
Problem solving is the process mentioned earlier by Putnam (1990) that includes reframing positions to interests and the abundance mentality of Covey (1989). This is the concept that "there is plenty out there for everybody." Perhaps Pruitt and Rubin (1986) described best these many forms of problem solving where a win/win is the result. They included the alternatives of expanding the pie, which expands the resources available to the parties or increases the available outcomes (Mitchell, 1981); and bridging where neither party achieves initial demands, but a new option is devised that satisfies the most important interests underlying those demands. The problems in the dispute are reframed until most of them are satisfied.

Although these additional forms of win/win can be found in the literature, the results of this study helped to adapt the first level of investigation in the guiding hypotheses. This was the integration of the two-way models, conflict resolution tactics, mixed motives, interests, being unconditionally constructive, and win/win or no deal. The integration of these issues might change the new model of symmetry for two-way public relations practices to look something like Figure 4. The box represents all of the independent, complementary and common interests for both the organization and its strategic publics. The box also encompasses the alternatives of negotiation tactics for both parties. The arrows above the dotted line extending through the win/win zone shows that these alternatives can flow both ways through the win/win zone to less desirable alternatives.

Note the absence of the terms asymmetrical and symmetrical. That is because the definition of mixed motives is a combination of asymmetric and symmetric communication. This model deals with degrees of each over the spectrum of asymmetric and symmetric

Figure 4

Mixed Motive Model of Public Relations


Win/Win Zone
Contention
Cooperation
Accommodation
1-Way
←
→
←
→
←
→
1-Way
Avoidance
Unconditional
Compromise
Win/Win or ND
Interests of Organization and Publics

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communication. The only way to represent two ends on either side of the model would be to represent the one-way models of press agentry and public information. The two-way models would not quite extend to the one-way model ends. Two-way symmetrical communication is not entirely win/win. It can include elements of compromise, accommodation, and even avoidance since part of avoidance is unconditional or win/win or no deal. Likewise, two-way asymmetrical is not entirely contending but can include elements of all the other negotiation tactics. Remember, mixed motives still looks after the best interests of the organization itself. It is an enlightened self-interest stating that what is best for itself is best for its public, too.

The Dominant Coalition

In the final analysis, membership in the dominant coalition encompassed all the research questions but especially:

1. Public Relations Influence on Dominant Coalition -- solving problems -- the ability to handle critical contingencies and strategic publics for the dominant coalition, plus experience in business, knowledge and experience in the field, and sound judgement.

2. Dominant Coalition Influence on Public Relations -- top management has a major effect on the practice of public relations. For this study that effect, for the most part, was symmetrical. The attitude of the dominant coalition was not necessarily personal or asymmetrical and also included elements of being unconditionally constructive.

The strongest pattern, then, of the four presented under the findings section was the influence of the dominant coalition on the way public relations was practiced in the organizations that participated in this study. The most diverse responses came from the issue of membership in the dominant coalition. The pattern that emerged about that membership was that it depended on the experience of the public relations managers and their ability to solve problems for the organization. In addition, the evidence in this study showed that public relations is practiced ultimately in accordance with the preferences of the dominant coalition. Those preferences are neither personal nor asymmetrical. Part of the practice of public relations is explained by an organization's structure, environment, or models of public relations practice (J. Grunig, 1989a; L. Grunig, 1990). This study found the claims of the power-control theory (L. Grunig, 1992b) to be true but only in the positive sense. Distilling these patterns further for this study could lead to the statement that:

> The dominant coalition directly affects the practice of public relations in a two-way, mixed motive manner.

The findings of this study, then, predominately concur with the state of the field for both practice and theory in public relations. It strongly reinforces the fact that the typical practice of public relations involves mixed motives. It begins to flesh out what mixed motives means, especially when the definition of two-way symmetrical communication is given as one of negotiation between parties for mutual benefit. This study answers questions of the degree of conflict solutions to problem-solving for public relations and what is meant by mutual benefit. It also adds the concepts of unconditionally constructive and win/win or no deal to the lexicon of symmetric or win/win communication. It differs from the new model of symmetry in public relations in that mixed motives are not symmetric but can stretch along the entire spectrum of the new model to include asymmetric communication either from the dominant coalition or the strategic publics' perspective. The study also introduces other alternatives of win/win or ways to get past stalemate to include expanding the pie or bridging.

Any long-term relationship, whether it be between a public relations manager and the dominant coalition, or an organization and its strategic publics, depends mostly on activity that is reciprocally positive for its survival. This study has shown that short-term two-way asymmetrical or contending tactics can have a place in a long-term relationship. Those activities, however, are outweighed by longer-term, two-way symmetrical tactics that can include avoidance, accommodation, compromise, cooperation, unconditionally constructive, and win/win or no deal.

Recommendations for Further Research

A number of questions arose from these conclusions that deserve further investigation. Are short-term asymmetrical communication practices subordinate to long-term symmetrical practices as Dozier et al., (1995) suggested? Or, should those communication practices be considered separately from tactics or interests? Can short-term and long-term public relations be contradictory and complementary at the same time? Should solutions to problems be considered sequentially? Or, should they be considered concurrently in mixed motive relationships as this study might suggest? Can solutions to problems truly be benignly asymmetrical with the parties involved acting as cooperative antagonists?

This study seems to modify the new model of symmetry for two-way public relations practices to a broader spectrum, mixed motive model of public relations. Are there other options to this model? And, in the win/win zone, what other types of win/win are there besides possibly expanding the pie and bridging? Do these other types of win/win serve to get around stalemate, or will those other types of win/win be something new altogether? If the other side will not agree, regardless of any other options, what about dealing beyond unconditionally constructive or win/win or no deal?

This study, like most research in conflict resolution, made the assumption of dyadic negotiation behavior, offering prescriptions to parties prepared to enter one-on-one negotiation (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). By comparison, what about dealing with multiple publics with multiple interests: How do you negotiate with multiple publics? These subjects remain neglected topics (Polzer, Mannix, & Neale, 1995).

In creating the mixed motive model for public relations, it was suggested that the ends of the model be one-way public relations models, as in press agentry and public information. Does that make sense? This study suggested that one-way techniques in public relations could be used in two-way programs for public relations. Perhaps the separation of the one-way and two-way models should be re-investigated with the mixed motives model in mind.

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Getting Past the Impasse:

Framing as a Tool for Public Relations

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Running head: GETTING PAST THE IMPASSE

Getting Past the Impasse:
Framing as a Strategy for Public Relations

When an advocate of sex education claims to espouse "sexual literacy" and an opponent warns that sex-education programs "presume perversion," the clash represents something far more significant than public bickering. The frame each side has adopted for its message helps to shape public opinion and perhaps, ultimately, advance or impede public policy.

Such a debate also may signal opportunities in public relations, as has been the case with sex education. Too often, however, public relations practitioners are placed in a reactive rather than a proactive position. With teen pregnancy on the rise and AIDS spreading to younger segments of the population, the idea of sex education in public schools has attracted increasing support from parents. Eight out of ten parents in the United States now favor in-school sex education programs (Neuman, 1992, p. 13). As of 1992, 47 states required or encouraged such programs (Trudell, p. 19). Not infrequently, however, progress toward implementation has been frustrated by various political factions with divergent views on exactly what information mandated programs should communicate (Klein, 1992; Sears, 1992; Trudell, 1993). As political parties themselves struggle to incorporate diverse interests, political leaders tend to avoid discussing the issue. Consequently, sex education programs have been watered down or given low priority on political agendas (Trudell, 1993). At this state of impasse, practitioners are often called upon to placate disappointed activists and "sell" the programs to the public.

The use of framing by public relations practitioners themselves offers a potential solution to the problem. This paper will examine two research streams in mass communication that have dealt with the linkages among media, public opinion and policy--agenda setting and public relations. It then will argue that the construct of framing is central to those linkages. Thus, framing represents an effective tool through which public relations practitioners can mediate debate concerning public policy. To illustrate how the framing process could work, the paper will analyze the various interest groups active in the sex-education debate to determine how they frame the issue. It also will seek to find areas of mutual agreement. The paper will conclude with suggestions for new frames that might promote more effective dialogue.

Agenda Setting

That mass media play an influential role in shaping political reality was demonstrated by McCombs and Shaw (1972) in their study of the 1968 presidential campaign. The study found a strong relationship between the emphasis the media placed on campaign issues and the importance voters attached to those issues. The authors named the effect "agenda setting." Over the next 25 years, numerous studies of agenda setting demonstrated the influence of additional variables. In 1992, Shaw and Martin conducted a statewide follow-up to the original Chapel Hill study and proposed a cyclical model of agenda setting that recognized the agenda-setting roles not only of journalists, but of other individuals, events, community and interest groups, and competing issues and agendas. Pan and Kosicki (1993) proposed a similar, cyclical model that advanced the idea of a system set of shared beliefs underlying the process as a whole. Other researchers have postulated that the relationship is linear (Manheim, 1987; Van Leuven & Slater, 1991) and have offered evidence for a linear model (Johnson, Wanta, Boudreau, Blank-Libra, Schefler & Turner, 1996; Rogers, Dearing & Chang, 1991).

Recently, several studies have underscored the importance of interpersonal communication to the agenda-setting process. Zaller (1992) noted that political elites control the framing of an issue and thus define public opinion; Weaver, Zhu and Willnat (1992) found that interpersonal communication was significantly related to interpretation of an issue as a social problem; and Minnis and Pratt (1994) found that journalistic norms and informal policies influenced the media agenda. Brosius and Weimann (1996) identified individuals they called "early recognizers" who were active in identifying emerging issues and diffusing them to the public. "It is possible that many of these early recognizers are indeed media gatekeepers and reporters, whose job, at least in part, is surveillance. They might be tied into social and organizational networks, in the course of their work, that allow them to follow closely the emergence of a social issue and transfer this knowledge to the news-gathering organizations" (p. 576). Thus, regardless of whether agenda setting is a cyclical or linear process, it clearly has multiple steps and multiple players. Those players include not only journalists, but other professionals with ties to the media whose duties include surveillance. Certainly, those other players include public relations practitioners.

Public Relations

As the model for agenda setting has broadened to encompass influences outside the realm of journalism, so has the model for excellence in public relations expanded beyond the notions of press agentry and public information. The concept of two-way symmetrical public relations was introduced by Grunig and Hunt (1984), who described four ways that contemporary public relations was practiced. With the two-way model, they said, practitioners strive to bring about changes in the ideas, attitudes and behaviors of both the organization and the public. A considerable body of research has documented public relations' success in influencing the media. Turk (1986) found these efforts influential, but not to the exclusion of other factors, such as the influence of journalists themselves. Other researchers also found evidence of an "agenda-building" influence. Moreover, they described a wide variety of influences on the media. Walters and Walters (1992) noted the importance of interpersonal communication; Berkowitz and Adams (1990), of interest groups and non-profit organizations; Morton and Warren (1992) and Walters, Walters and Gray (1996), of readers' interests; and Burns (1994) and McCombs (1994), of reporters and editors.

The Grunig model of public relations behavior has expanded to recognize the number of avenues through which practitioners can influence public opinion. In 1989 and again in 1992, J. Grunig and L. Grunig abandoned the idea that each of the four types of public relations practice could contribute equally to organizational effectiveness. Declaring the superiority of symmetric approaches, J. Grunig wrote: "One of the major purposes of excellent public relations is to balance the private interests of the organization with the interests of publics and of society" (1992, p. 241). Other researchers developed constructs that complemented the new model. Salmon and Oshagan (1990) contributed the idea that public relations could foster an "information environment" favorable to the organization's position by emphasizing the congruity of the organization's position with the community's. Dozier and Ehling (1992) suggested that practitioners engage in "coorientation," efforts to increase both the public's understanding of and agreement with organizational objectives, and "environmental scanning," early recognition of potential public relations problems. Ehling and Dozier (1992) suggested "principled negotiation" as an appropriate tool for public relations practice.

Recently, J. Grunig, L. Grunig and Dozier (1995) proposed a new two-dimensional model of public relations that combined the two-way symmetrical and asymmetrical models. The new model is asymmetrical at each end--targetting both the organization and its publics--and features a symmetrical, "win-win" zone in the middle. Their research suggested that the model also might include a second, orthogonal dimension with interpersonal communication at one end and mediated communication at the other. The authors observed that achieving the ideal win-win situation, with advantages for both the organization and its publics, often requires compromise, but that efforts to help publics at the organization's expense often are unappreciated by the organization's dominant coalition. Thus, the organization itself should be treated as another public. The article listed strategies appropriate for influencing the organization--contending and avoiding; for influencing the public--accommodating and compromising; and for achieving the win-win goal--cooperation, being unconditionally constructive, and saying win-win or no deal. Personal communication would be important for both public and organizational influence. The authors called for more research dealing with "strategies that practitioners can and do use at different points on this continuum" (p. 23).

Framing, a tool already used in a variety of public relations applications, seems to meet the need the authors describe. With skillful use, it can shift attention away from less-fruitful aspects of public debates and help focus attention on possible solutions.

Framing as a Win-Win Tool

The construct of framing offers potential as a tool for achieving the advantageous win-win situation. Entman described framing as "selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text" (1993, p. 52). Frames help to define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments and suggest remedies, he said. They work through selection and salience, highlighting some features of a piece of communication and making them more salient, or noticeable and meaningful, to the audience. Manheim's model of agenda setting (1987) recognized salience as a direct influence on both the media agenda through "audience salience" (p. 502) and the public agenda through "personal salience" (p. 504). Salience was not mentioned as a direct influence on the policy agenda, though "freedom of action" was. Manheim observed that "the degree of freedom of action of policymakers will vary directly with the quiescence of the citizenry" (p. 507). By extension, then, demonstrated audience salience could indirectly influence the policy agenda by increasing decision-makers' freedom to act.

Framing, thus, can potentially influence three types of agendas. The media agenda can be influenced through the framing of information subsidies for gatekeepers such as reporters and editors and through well-chosen frames for interpersonal communication between the organization and the journalists. The public agenda can be influenced by selecting frames that personalize abstract or distant issues, as was demonstrated by Rogers, Dearing and Chang (1991) in their study of media coverage of the AIDS issue during the 1980s. Finally, the public agenda can be influenced by making decision-makers aware of shifts in the salience of relevant issues among the decision-makers' constituents. Creating awareness of these shifts could be accomplished through the presentation of media-sponsored polls or organization-sponsored research, which might include surveys, interviews, or focus groups.

Experimental evidence demonstrates that framing can influence public opinion. In widely cited experiments illustrating the power of framing, Kahneman and Tversky (1984) described two hypothetical programs proposed to help the United States prepare for the outbreak of a deadly disease that was expected to kill 600 people. If the first proposal were adopted, test subjects were told, 200 people would be saved; if the second were adopted, there would be a one-third probability that 600 people would be saved and a two-third probability that no people would be saved. The vast majority of subjects--72 percent--preferred the first program; 22 percent chose the second. In a related experiment, the identical options were presented but framed in terms of likely deaths: In the first program 400 people would die; in the second, there would be a one-third probability that nobody would die and a two-thirds probability that 600 would die. The percentages choosing the options changed: 22 percent chose the first option and 72 percent, the second. Similarly, Sniderman, Brody and Tetlock (1991) found that a majority of the U.S. public supports the rights of a person with AIDS when the issue is framed to accentuate civil liberties, and a majority supports mandatory HIV testing when the issue is framed to emphasize public health. As both articles suggest, frames not only direct attention to particular facets of an issue, but also help the public decide how to deal with it.

Framing recently has been proposed as a conflict-resolution strategy in interpersonal communication. Drake and Donohue (1996) found that selecting a common frame for negotiation improved the ability of disputants in divorce proceedings to forge agreements. Fact-based frames appeared more helpful than frames based on values or other issues. That framing might serve a similar function in mass communication was posited by Pan and Kosicki (1993). In their model of the news media discourse process, news discourse operates in the domain of shared beliefs, or frames, "known to and accepted by a majority of the society as common sense or conventional wisdom" (p. 69). They suggested four framing devices through which news discourse might be analyzed: 1) syntactical structures such as news leads and headlines; 2) script structures such as how a news story begins and ends; 3) theme structures such as hypotheses and conclusions; and 4) rhetorical devices such as metaphors and catchphrases. Through such structures, they suggested, frames provide the foundation on which public policy issues are constructed and negotiated.

Framing, then, appears to meet J. Grunig, L. Grunig and Dozier's stated need for strategies that public relations practitioners can use at various points on their new contingency-model continuum. It can help to define and solve problems; it can help to shape public opinion; it can increase the productivity of interpersonal negotiations; and it has been proposed as a foundation for public discourse, such as negotiation, on a mass-communication level. Within the Grunig, Grunig and Dozier two-dimensional, contingency model of public relations, framing strategy would fit within the second, orthogonal dimension, the "continuum that runs through the first continuum with interpersonal forms of communication on one end and mediated communication on the other" (1995, p. 26).

Practitioners' Roles in Framing

Public relations practitioners occupy positions ideally suited for framing issues in a way likely to advance both public and organizational interests. Their traditional roles as media and community liaisons offer opportunities for framing issues of interest, as do their less-recognized roles as lobbyists, negotiators, and environmental scanners. Several studies have offered guidance about how practitioners at either the interpersonal or mediated end of the continuum can construct frames to accomplish their objectives. The recommendations apply to three general areas of practitioner responsibility: organizational communication, external communication and production of media.

Organizational communication. Framing can and should be applied not only in communication with an organization's publics but also in those targeting the organization itself. J. Grunig, L. Grunig & Dozier (1995) make the point that dominant coalitions are not always excited about the potential of compromise in negotiations with external publics, even though compromise might be in the best interests of the organization. Consequently, the status of public relations practitioners within the organization may decline and, with it, opportunities to advance organizational objectives. Practitioners can avert such difficulties by framing negotiations in terms of positive rather than negative expectancies, that is, by emphasizing that negotiations have been proposed because of "opportunities" rather than to "save face" or "prevent disasters." Similarly, avoiding negative labels for negotiators representing hostile publics can foster a friendlier environment for dialogue. Care needs to be taken, however, so that positive labels do not appear condescending. As environmental scanners charged with keeping the organization informed of relevant developments outside the organization, practitioners also can frame their findings in presentations to the dominant coalition. New developments can be presented as "interesting" facts or developments or "potential problems." The choice of frame can influence whether practitioners are regarded as astute observers of business trends or simply bearers of bad tidings. The more favorable image would likely increase the practitioner's power within the organization and the dominant coalition's comfort with public relations involvement in negotiations.

External communication. Journalists contribute to both public and policy agendas through the frames they adopt in reporting about an issue (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). If the topic is controversial, these frames often emphasize conflict (Shaw & Martin, 1992; Pan & Kosicki, 1993). From a journalistic viewpoint, conflict is good. It makes for good reading or visuals, and it constitutes a story in itself: "Opponents meet and clash." No thoughtful analysis is required; the major concern is to be fair and accurate, to balance the two sides. From a public relations viewpoint, however, conflict frames are problematic. They often pit less powerful but attractive opponents such as environmentalists or blue-collar workers against the organization in a David-versus-Goliath scenario. The organization is perceived to be the bully. Even worse, stories emphasizing conflict often fail to discuss remedies, leaving negotiations without a course of action. In their study of the Wichita abortion-rights protest of 1991, Pan and Kosicki observed that confrontation frames were "very effective in depicting and marginalizing opponents" (1993, p. 65).

The same principle applies to value frames, those in which each side claims to hold the "morally superior" position. Shah, Domke and Wachman (1996), in their study of values and voting behavior, found that value frames "may lead to more noncompensatory decision-making by (a) activating ethical schema or attitudes, which motivates the voters to make judgments in ethical terms, and (b) providing specific information on ethically based candidate positions, which *enables* the voter actually to apply these ethical considerations in judgment" (pp. 533-534). That is, value frames distract from policy-centered debate and focus attention, instead, on candidates' personal lives and attributes. Both conflict and value frames, then, simply reinforce negative preconceptions of opponents without empowering those who would seek mutually acceptable solutions.

Public relations practitioners, in their agenda-building roles, can help to facilitate dialogue between opposing factions by offering alternatives to conflict or value frames. Progress frames are one possibility. If confrontations occur, the organization can suggest discussions or negotiations with its critics. These overtures, then, would become the new--and more fruitful--frame for news discourse. Answering criticisms with a "good corporate citizenship" frame also could work. To avoid being viewed as self-serving, however, it would be best to focus on the recipients of organizational goodwill as opposed to the organization's largesse. Fact-based frames also could prove useful, particularly if critics have proceeded from misinformation. The frames chosen for written communication with external publics should be reinforced through any interpersonal or visual communication that occurs between practitioners and journalists. Confrontations might be described as "enlightening," "opportunities for understanding," or "preludes to negotiation." If members of the dominant coalition were willing and not in danger of physical harm, they could be encouraged to meet and shake hands with opponents in view of news cameras. The meeting should represent an honest attempt at understanding opponents' views.

Since policymakers also are influenced by conflict and value frames, practitioners who engage in lobbying can target them with substitute frames. Factual frames are useful in such circumstances, especially if the organization's opponents represent views that are held by only a minority of voters. Factual frames also can help correct misperceptions stemming from inaccurate information circulated either by opponents or because of misunderstandings by the media. Policymakers are likely to be made aware of the organization's other substitute frames through their media consultants, public information officers, or personal exposure to media.

Factual frames hold special promise in negotiations with critics or opponents. Drake and Donohue (1996) explored the potential of framing in resolving conflicts related to divorce. They found the use of "converged frames" essential to progress in dialogue. That is, the couples best able to resolve their conflicts negotiated from the same frame or point of reference. "This finding is significant," the authors wrote, "because it represents the first attempt to tie frame convergence with outcome" (p. 316). Of the four frames Drake and Donohue studied--fact-based, interest-based, value-based and relational--fact-based frames were the most productive.

Negotiations focused on a hot-button public issue are not unlike negotiations that occur in stressful private situations such as divorce. In both cases, the arguments are likely to be stale and the opponents entrenched in their positions. However, many traditional dispute-settlement techniques are not available to organizations, because discussions often occur in public and opponents shout at each other across picket lines rather than a lawyer's desk. Techniques for corporate negotiations need to take these constraints into account, at least until opponents agree to mediation. Reframing issues through mass communication channels constitutes an attractive option. Once disputants are seated around the bargaining table, framing can be used to supplement other negotiating techniques.

Production of media. Frames for interpersonal communication targeting the dominant coalition and the organization's other publics should, for consistency's sake, be adopted in media produced by the organization. The question public relations practitioners must face is, "Which frame or frames should take precedence?" The answer depends on the audience. If the medium is an internal memorandum circulated among the dominant coalition, a positive-expectancy frame that avoids negative labels for opponents is likely to serve best. If the medium is a video news release intended for journalists, the frame employed should not be conflict- or value-based. Media intended for both organizational and external publics should be treated as news releases. The question becomes tricky only when the audience is both part of the organization and an opponent. Such instances would occur, for example, during strikes or other disputes that divide the organization. In these cases, a fact-based frame is indicated, since it is the most helpful in advancing discussion (Drake and Donohue, 1996).

Reframing Sex Education

Hospitals, health agencies, pharmaceutical companies and government have often become embroiled in controversial issues that pit them against factions that differed with their policies and actions. Not infrequently, the issues have been of long-term interest, with opponents staking out seemingly intractable positions. Public relations practitioners often have been enlisted by such organizations to help shift opponents' positions to ones more favorable to organizational objectives.

One such issue is sex education. It is of national concern and has involved the efforts of public relations practitioners in a variety of settings. Debate about whether sex education should be conducted in public schools and how it should be taught has continued for decades (Klein, 1992). The issue became more controversial in the 1960s with the rise of feminism and the introduction of the birth control pill. The controversy reached a crescendo in the 1980s with AIDS, the New Right, and greater cultural diversity among American voters (Sears, 1992). Sex education exemplifies many characteristics of organizational issues best approached through two-way symmetrical public relations. A variety of interest groups are involved, the debate is often acrimonious, and positions are well-defined. Indeed, positions have become "movements," and the views of their leaders the focus of books (See, for example, Felsenthal's *The Sweetheart of the Silent Majority*, a biography of Phyllis Schlafly, and *Life on the Line*, an autobiography by Faye Wattleton.) Media have become so sensitized to the debate that it has shaped journalistic norms. Journalists who favor easy access to abortion, for example, have influenced many metropolitan newsrooms to "automatically embrace the abortion-rights side of the argument" (David Shaw, quoted in Beasley & Gibbons, 1993, p. 36).

This section of the paper will examine the sex-education debate to demonstrate how the construct of framing could be applied to facilitate more productive dialogue. Most previous studies of framing have focused on how media have framed an issue by examining news articles or news broadcasts. Since this study is interested in how interest groups frame the issue, it will take a slightly different approach. Specifically, it will look at the writings and published interviews of interest group leaders. The groups and leaders to be examined are: The Religious and Far Right, as represented by Phyllis Schlafly and W.J. Bennett; health professionals, represented by Joycelyn Elders and Henry Foster; African-Americans/Progressives, represented by Jesse Jackson and Colin Powell; feminists, represented by Eleanor Smeal and Faye Wattleton; and gay/lesbian groups, represented by Rodger McFarlane and Virginia Apuzzo. All of these groups are discussed by Sears (1992) in his analysis of the politics of sex education and Klein (1992) in her examination of sex equity and education. Both also discuss the influence of school administrators, who they maintain have been part of the problem rather than the solutions. However, since no national leaders have emerged from this group on the topic of sex education, school administrators will be omitted from the analysis.

Classification of the general framing scheme will be based on Wehr's conflict map (1979, cited in and employed by Drake & Donohue, 1996). Conflict-map schemes classify the frames used in verbal disputes into four categories: (1) factual; 2) interest; 3) value; and 4) relational. Factual disputes focus on appraisals of reality. Interest-based disputes encompass future desires or aspirations. Value-based disputes concern disagreements over right or wrong, based on moral or relational foundations. And relational disputes center around the emotional ties between disputants and often involve problems of trust, control or intimacy.

The analysis also will examine how each group defines problems, diagnoses causes, makes moral judgments and suggests remedies. In addition, it will examine three categories of textual frames: exemplars, catchphrases, and depictions. These attributes of framing were discussed by Entman (1993); similar concepts were employed by Beckett (1996) in her analysis of the framing of child sexual abuse. According to Entman, problem definition identifies what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits. Cause diagnosis identifies the forces creating the problem. Moral judgments evaluate the causal agents and their effects. And offering remedies suggests treatments for the problem and predicts their likely effects. In this analysis, exemplars may be taken to mean stereotyped images; catchphrases, stock or frequently occurring clusters of words; and depictions, judgments or portrayals of opponents.

Findings

The spokespersons examined employed a variety of frame categories in their writings and published statements, and most employed more than one category (See Table 1). The Religious Right engaged in predominantly value-based discussion, while health professionals tended to frame their discussions in terms of facts. The Far Right and African-American/Progressives both employed a combination of factual and value-based frames, though the two groups differed in other respects, such as how they attributed the problem's cause. Feminist and gay/lesbian groups both employed a combination of fact- and interest-based frames.

The Religious and Far Right. The Religious Right and Far Right differed enough in their framing of the sex education issue to be coded separately. Both Phyllis Schlafly of the Eagle Forum and William J. Bennett, former Secretary of Education under Reagan, have written books devoted to their criticisms of public education generally and sex education particularly (Schlafly, 1984; Bennett, 1988). This analysis has been drawn primarily from those volumes. The problem with sex education in public schools, according to Schlafly, is that it fails to convey moral values, which "teaches teenagers how to enjoy fornication without having a baby and without feeling guilty" (1981, quoted in Sears, p. 308). She attributes the problem to educational fads such as humanism or "therapy education" as opposed to "cognitive education" (Schlafly, pp. 12-13). As her book title suggests, she sees children as "abused" by liberal educators, whom she describes as "arrogant," "anti-parent" and "anti-religion" (Schlafly, p. 435). Her solution is to teach only abstinence and to condemn abortion as immoral and homosexuality as abnormal (Schlafly, p. 439).

The Far Right, represented by Bennett, agrees on the solution, but it defines the problem more broadly and reaches the solution through a different route. The problem is not only immorality and promiscuity, in Bennett's view, but the damage to young lives resulting from teen pregnancy, abortion and AIDS (Bennett, 1987). The causes are multiple enticements to sex, including peer pressure and the media. Abstinence is viewed as the best solution because of facts: "Condoms are not 100 percent reliable" (Bennett, 1988, p. 106), and "there is no evidence that making contraceptives available is the surest strategy for preventing pregnancy--to say nothing about preventing sexual activity" (1988, p. 98). Opponents are, thus, uninformed or, as suggested by Bennett's book title, unpatriotic. Contraceptives might be mentioned in a sex education program, Bennett wrote, but the decision on whether to mention them or how much say should be left to local communities (1988, p. 104).

Health professionals. This group agrees with the Far Right on the nature of the problem, except for the need to teach moral values. "Everyone has different moral standards," observed Joycelyn Elders, former U.S. Surgeon General under Clinton. "You can't impose your standards on someone else (1993, quoted in Klein, p. 37). The solution is comprehensive sex education in public schools and easy access to condoms and other types of contraceptives. In terms of AIDS, "all we've really got to help is education," Elders said (1995, quoted in Barnes, p. 36). As scientists, health professionals seem most comfortable arguing from facts. Elders, for example, cited the high percentage of children who are unaffiliated with churches as evidence that churches cannot assume the role of sex educator (Barnes, 1995, pp. 36-37). Foster, an obstetrician-gynecologist who was nominated for U.S. Surgeon General in 1995 but failed to win confirmation, views the political system as the problem: "They may politicize the issue, but they won't politicize me," he told the *Washington Post* before his confirmation hearing (1995, quoted in Blumenfeld, p. D01). Part of the reason for Congress' opposition to Foster centered around his anti-teen pregnancy program, I Have a Future. Statements from the program guide that critics mentioned during the hearing included that abstinence and contraception are "equally responsible" methods of birth control and that teens should determine for themselves what their personal values are toward sexuality, "even if those personal values may be in conflict with one's parents" (1995, quoted in Dreher & Wetzstein, p. 1A). Elders also has blamed the system, which she said has criticized unwed mothers on one hand and rewarded them with welfare checks on the other (Barnes, p. 35). Opponents are thus depicted as irrational (Barnes, p. 36) or hypocritical. "They love little babies until they are born," Elders once remarked of political conservatives (1994, quoted in Frankel, p. 41).

African-Americans/progressives. This group has much in common with the Far Right, including its emphasis on teaching moral values. However, the problem, causes and solutions are defined as more complex. The "cycle of illegitimacy" that so concerns the Far Right is only one of many problems that progressives see plaguing black youth. In their view, poverty, hopelessness and the influence of mass media also must be addressed (Cummings & Rudnicki, 1995; Hatch, 1988; House, 1988). The solution is to enlist parents, schools, church and communities to promote pride and self-respect among teens. Both the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who calls himself a "progressive" (Nichols, 1995), and Colin Powell, an independent with wide support among conservatives, have been involved in teen self-help projects based on these principles. Jackson established the PUSH/Excel

Program, which encouraged black youth of both sexes to strive toward solid, middle-class virtues (House, 1988) and Powell takes part in Best Friends, an anti-teen pregnancy project targeting inner-city girls. Best Friends was founded by Elayne Bennett, an educator and the wife of William J. Bennett (Stoeltje, 1996). Both Jackson and Powell are pro-choice; Jackson favors abortion (Wattleton, 1996, p. 53), while Powell prefers alternatives such as adoption (Cummings, p. 14). Both Jackson and Powell also have expressed acceptance of gays, if not whole-hearted support (Cummings & Rudnicki, 1995; Harper, 1996; Hatch, 1988). Opponents are viewed as immoral and short-sighted. "The moral center," Jackson said, "is ... reclaiming America's children--they are in trouble" (1995, quoted in Nichols, p. 30).

Feminists. This perspective is represented by Faye Wattleton, a former president of Planned Parenthood, and Eleanor Smeal, a former president of the National Organization for Women. Feminists are strongly focused on their agenda for change but, like health professionals, tend to argue from a factual frame. They define the sex education problem in terms of women's issues and rights--access to information and a full range of contraceptives, including abortion. The causes of reduced access are seen as multiple: economics (Koeppel, 1995); patriarchy (Wattleton, 1996); and absence of media support (Koeppel, 1995). Perhaps in self-defense, feminists are particularly skillful in the use of textual frames, such as exemplars and depictions. In her autobiography, Wattleton recounts numerous examples of her experiences with victims of abortion restrictions. These included 17-year-olds who died from illegal abortions, mothers who suffered humiliations to avoid giving birth to seriously deformed children, and unwanted children left in a "vegetative state" by abuse (1996, p. 47). Also based on personal experience, Wattleton described opponents as arsonists, kidnappers and lawbreakers. According to Smeal, some opponents are hypocritical: "Jesse Helms takes money from and supports the tobacco industry, rants against gays, and wants to deregulate the environment, and the next minute talks about the evil of killing babies" (1995, quoted in Koeppel, p. 32).

Gays/lesbians. These perspectives are represented in this analysis by Virginia Apuzzo, president of the New York Civil Service Commission and a former executive director of the National Gay Task Force, and by Rodger McFarlane, former executive director of the Gay Men's Health Crisis. Although both have been advocates for homosexual issues on the national level, their public statements have tended to focus on gay and lesbian issues other than sex education. Still, the statements suggest concerns that a sex education program sensitive to the needs of gays and lesbians would need to address. One such issue is that of inclusion. Apuzzo has been important in raising public awareness of AIDS and has tried to relate it to broader questions of health policy. "The Public Health Service now doesn't take too many steps without informing us," she told one interviewer. "We may disagree violently with the steps they're taking, but we've institutionalized our presence in the process" (quoted in Altman, p. 105). She has complained of the Center for Disease Control's unwillingness to negotiate with gay groups on issues such as confidentiality in AIDS testing (Altman, p. 80) and has lobbied Congress to seek more money for AIDS research when the CDC was unwilling to ask for it (Altman, pp. 113-114). McFarlane's statements to the media have often underscored his awareness of the stigma associated both with homosexuality and AIDS. "I'd rather be an actor with AIDS than a plumber or teacher with AIDS," he once remarked. "I'll be better taken care of" (Span, 1990, p. G1). He complained publicly about discrimination against AIDS patients by hospitals. Discharging such patients to public shelters, he told *The New York Times*, "is as good as homicide" (Howe, 1984, p. B4). An ideal sex education program, then, would deal candidly with homosexuality and AIDS and not condemn anyone's sexual preferences. Like feminists, gays and lesbians have tended to adopt a factual/interest-based frame. For them, the major problems are the increasing incidence of AIDS and discrimination against homosexuals.

Failing to do everything possible to prevent and treat AIDS is immoral. Exemplars include stories of discrimination against homosexuals and AIDS patients, and foot-dragging by policymakers. As suggested by the title of Altman's book, opponents are depicted as bungling bureaucrats and "puritans."

Discussion

Based on this analysis and the findings of Drake and Donohue, a fact-based frame emphasizing some aspect of public health would be most likely to foster action on the issue of sex education. All the groups except the Religious Right have employed factual frames at least in part, and public health professionals have used them almost exclusively. Even the Far Right has acknowledged that AIDS and teen pregnancy pose serious health risks to young people (Bennett, 1988, p. 103). Such programs might even be reframed as "AIDS education," which emphasizes the public-health aspect and avoids the hot-button term "sex." As long as homosexuality is not endorsed, discussing it in such a context would be acceptable to all but the Religious Right, as would discussing condoms as one of two methods that health professionals recommend to prevent the fatal disease. Bennett, of the Far Right, suggests that the timing and content of such instruction be left to local communities (1988, p. 104).

"AIDS education" might be offered by public schools as a "core health package" required of all students to help protect them and others from infection. Since parental authority has been a concern of the Religious Right, parents also could be offered one of two choices for supplementary health education to address teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases other than AIDS, which also pose serious health threats. Teen mothers, for example, often suffer complications of pregnancy and have a higher than average incidence of low birth-weight babies. As one option, parents would assume sole responsibility for their child's sex education other than AIDS. They would automatically receive printed materials to assist them, including information on contraceptives and statistics on infection rates among teens. They also could sign up for a course offering tips on how to communicate with teens, which they would help to develop. Parental involvement in developing the course would be important, since that would promote their "ownership" of the solution. If parents chose the second option, they would receive school assistance in educating their children about sexuality through the school's "Human Development" course. This course would inform teens about physical development, reproduction, and a full range of contraceptive options, including abstinence. The course would be taught from a public health perspective and, thus, would not emphasize moral values. The first option would more likely appeal to the Religious Right, the Far Right, and some African-American groups. The second would have greatest appeal among health professionals, feminists and gay/lesbian groups.

This proposal for reframing the sex education debate could be tested further through a scientific poll. Respondents might, for example, be asked whether they would support an "AIDS education" course in public schools. To gauge public support for such a course as opposed to sex education, they might be asked which of several options they found most appealing: a required AIDS education course; a required sex education course that promoted abstinence only; a required sex education course that included both AIDS and sex education; or no AIDS or sex education. Polling results could be released to reporters for publication, shown to editorial writers in seeking supportive comment, and discussed with political leaders as a foundation for their action on the issue. Practitioners would want to provide a fact-based frame in information supplied to the media, so that the media would cover the plan without exacerbating old conflicts. Operating from a fact-based frame with a proposal in hand that addressed at least some of their concerns, activists on both sides of the issue would likely be more willing than in the past to negotiate toward a solution of the problem.

This exercise in framing has been provided as a hypothetical example of the technique's potential in public relations. In a real-world setting, of course, the views of parents, teachers, students and school administrators also should be incorporated in the development of a workable frame. These views probably would be obtained through interviews and local newspaper articles rather than through books and magazines, although any reliable source of comment could be employed. To promote an environment favorable to negotiation, public relations practitioners also would want to offer substitute frames within their own organizations.

The concept of framing can be applied to a wide variety of issues in many different settings. Many public relations practitioners already use framing in a short-term context as they write news releases, develop organizational communications, and deal with various publics. By applying the concept over the long term in a planned, consistent manner, however, practitioners can advance not only organizational objectives but also contribute to the solution of some of society's thorniest problems.

Table 1: Framing of the sex education issue by interest groups

Group	Frame	Causes	Moral Judgment	Remedies	Exemplars	Catchphrases	Depictions
Religious Right	value-based: promiscuity, declining moral values	educational fads, such as humanism; influence of liberal media	Sex education that does not convey moral values is wrong.	teach abstinence; condemn homosexuality; do not teach options or alternative lifestyles	parents ignored by schools; children confused and traumatized	"pro-abortion"; "therapy education"; "educational experiments"	arrogant, anti-parent, anti-religion, baby-killers
Far Right	factual/value-based: promiscuity; high rates of teen pregnancy; AIDS; STDs	multiple social enticements, including media and peer pressure	Sex education that does not convey moral values is ineffective and wrong.	teach abstinence; teach homosexuality as undesirable; teach options only with parental consent	parents, peers and schools as allies.	"self-respect"; "self-restraint"; "responsible behavior"	misguided, uninformed, untruthful, unpatriotic
Health Professionals	factual: high rates of teen pregnancy; AIDS; STDs	the system: inequalities in information; access	"You can't impose your (moral) standards on someone else." / hypocrisy	comprehensive and value-free sex education in public schools; distribution of condoms, birth control pills, etc.	blind leading the blind; teens rewarded for early parenting with welfare	"pro-choice"; "planned parenthood"; "wanted babies"	irrational, uninformed
African-Americans/ Progressives	factual/ value-based: violence; drug use; teen pregnancy; hopelessness	multiple, but most often poverty, breakdown of social institutions, the media	Ignoring those in need is irresponsible, immoral.	parent, church and community involvement; government or private investment; sex education based on community standards; incentives	parents cooperating with schools, churches; academic and financial success stories	"American Dream"; "sense of pride"; "self-respect"; "cycle of poverty or illegitimacy"	controlling, uncaring, short-sighted

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Table 1A: Framing of the sex education issue by interest groups

Group	Frame	Causes	Moral Judgment	Remedies	Exemplars	Catchphrases	Depictions
Feminists	factual/ interest-based: teen pregnancy, unwanted pregnancies	multiple: patriarchy, economic exploitation, lack of equal access	Denying access to contraceptives or information about sexuality is hypocritical.	comprehensive sex education in schools; easy access to contraceptives and abortions.	foster care and orphanages as alternatives to abortion, priests as pedophiles	"informed choice"; "women's rights"; "reproductive tyranny"	reactionaries; woman and child haters; manipulators
Gays/ Lesbians	factual/ interest-based: AIDS epidemic, discrimination	multiple: ignorance, homophobia, system's failure to include homosexual perspective	Failing to do everything possible to prevent AIDS is immoral, hypocritical.	comprehensive sex education in schools, including frank discussion about AIDS transmission and prevention, homosexuality	discriminiation against AIDS patients, HIV-infected people; footdragging by Congress, states, government agencies	"raising awareness"; "inclusion"; "recognition"	ignorant bunglars; puritans

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A COORIENTATIONAL APPROACH TO ANALYZING OBSTACLES TO NEGOTIATION AMONG INTEREST GROUPS

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RUNNING HEAD: Analyzing Obstacles to Negotiation

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A COORIENTATIONAL APPROACH TO ANALYZING OBSTACLES TO NEGOTIATION AMONG INTEREST GROUPS

Abstract

Symmetric public relations models call for negotiated solutions to conflicts between an organization and external publics. However, such models provide little guidance in predicting the relationships and behaviors of external groups, identifying obstacles to negotiation, and developing communication strategies which encourage cooperation. In this paper, a strategic approach to initiating negotiations is proposed. The method is applied to the conflict over recreation use impacts at Sand Flats Recreation Area, and recommendations are made for refinement.

A COORIENTATIONAL APPROACH TO ANALYZING OBSTACLES TO NEGOTIATION AMONG INTEREST GROUPS

Introduction

Symmetric public relations models call for negotiated, two-way solutions to conflicts which arise between an organization and external interest groups. However, such models provide little guidance to an organization in predicting the relationships and behaviors of external groups, identifying potential barriers to negotiation, and developing communication strategies for enhancing the probability of a negotiated solution to a conflict.

Game theory has the potential to bridge gaps in asymmetric-symmetric public relations models, according to Murphy (1991b). In explorations to date, however, game theory limitations involving multiple equilibria and coalition formation in n-player games remain unaddressed. To develop a strategic approach to public relations based on game theory, the question becomes one of identifying a conceptual framework and associated method for analyzing the relationships between an organization and external interest groups involved in a conflict.

Coorientation theory (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973) offers insights into a possible method. The coorientation model depicts the possible relationships between two or more individuals or groups by measuring congruency, accuracy, understanding, and agreement. Organizational theory suggests that shared interests, willingness to negotiate, power, and legitimacy can affect the degree and type of coorientation between groups.

In this paper, a conceptual framework and associated method is proposed for identifying and (where possible) overcoming potential obstacles to negotiation between an organization and external interest groups. The method is applied to the conflict over recreation use impacts at Sand Flats Recreation Area near Moab, Utah. Based on the results, the proposed method is reassessed and recommendations made for further refinement.

Symmetric Approaches

Grunig and Hunt (1984) describe for models of public relations practice: press agentry/ publicity, public information, two-way asymmetric, and two-way symmetric. The basic purpose of asymmetric public relations (which includes the first three types) is to persuade internal and external publics to accept the organization's point of view and to behave in a way that supports the organization. In contrast, Grunig and Hunt describe the goal of symmetric public relations as developing mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. Organizations practicing symmetric public relations use bargaining, negotiation, and other strategies for conflict resolution to bring about changes in the ideas, attitudes, and behaviors or both the organization and its publics (Grunig, 1989).

Although asymmetric-symmetric public relations models are widely used, researchers question the utility of such models in helping an organization to identify potential barriers to negotiation with external interest groups and develop communication strategies for enhancing the probability of a negotiated solution to a conflict. According to Murphy (1991b), dividing public relations into two modes tends to polarize undesirable communication behavior into one mode (one-way asymmetric) and desirable into the other (two-way symmetric). Murphy also observes that symmetric communications are very rare in actual practice. Studies of the predictors and effects of asymmetric and symmetric models tend to be normative, reflecting what an organization should do rather than accurately predicting organizational behavior.

Springston, Keyton, Leichty, and Metzger (1992) point out that symmetric communication methods do not explain the problem in which an organization must communicate with multiple groups about a problem. Increasing environmental complexity is forcing organizations to differentiate among multiple external groups and manage them simultaneously. Springston et al. believe that future developments of public relations theory need to consider the multiple groups concerned with issues and the simultaneous relationships among these groups.

Game Theory Approach

Game theory provides a framework for addressing issues of polarity and strategy selection associated with asymmetric-symmetric models of public relations, Murphy (1991b) suggests. The basic premise of game theory is that conflicts of interest can be modeled as games of strategy. All games have three basic elements: players, strategies, and payoffs (Nicholson, 1992). The individuals or groups involved in the decision-making process are considered "players" in a game. Each course of action open to a player is called a "strategy." The final returns to the players of a game at its conclusion are called "payoffs."

Game theory applies two standard rationality axioms. The first axiom is that, given a set of alternative payoffs, a player can rank them in order of preference, from what one wants most to what one wants least. A second axiom is that these preferences are transitive or consistent. In some situations, the hierarchy of preferences provides insufficient information upon which to base a decision and intensity of feeling becomes important in deciding to follow a particular strategy (Bell & Coplans, 1976).

Players select strategies for achieving their preferred payoff. A strategy is never considered in isolation, but rather is based on what action is best given the likely strategies of the other players involved in the game (Murphy, 1990, 1991a, 1991b). The cautious approach in selecting strategies is to assume the worst and act accordingly (Luce & Raiffa, 1958; Baumol, 1965). This leads to an important component of game theory: the minimax theorem. Player A selects a "maximum" strategy, aiming at the highest of several payoffs determined by the possible counter-strategies of the opposing player, Player B. By selecting a maximum strategy, Player A ensures that it will receive no less than a certain payoff. Player B in turn selects a "minimax" strategy, which minimizes the risk to Player B given Player A's possible strategies. By selecting a minimax strategy, Player B ensures that Player A will receive no more than a certain payoff.

The interaction between strategies leads to "equilibria," or plans of action such that each player, given the choices of the other players, has no incentive to change its plans (Sebenius, 1992). As Murphy (1990, 1991a) explains, as long as one player thinks there is a feasible way to improve its payoff which the other players cannot prevent, it will change its actions. The only stable solution to a conflict is the equilibrium, a position where no player can do better given the other players' choices and there are no other points where all players can simultaneously do better.

The Conflict-Cooperation Continuum

In game theory, asymmetric and symmetric public relations equate to games of pure conflict and pure cooperation (Murphy, 1991b). Ehling (quoted in Murphy, 1991b) conceptualizes cooperation and conflict as states located at the opposite ends of a single continuum, so that it becomes meaningful to think of cooperation and conflict as being opposite but also expressible in degrees. As a player moves away from the cooperation end-point, the movement is toward conflict so that the degree of cooperation decreases and vice versa.

Pure Conflict (Zero-Sum) Games. At the pure-conflict end of the conflict-cooperation continuum are zero-sum games. In such games, the sum of all players' payoffs is equal to zero; whatever one player gains, the other players must lose and vice versa (Harsanyi, 1977; Coleman, 1982). Zero-sum bargaining is power- or persuasion-based, with little attention paid to the other players' wants, needs, or desires (Gossen & Sharp, 1987). The competitive game metaphor surfaces particularly strongly during times of crisis, when an organization's strategy conflicts with the needs of diverse groups (Murphy, 1991a, 1991b). However, most interactions between an organization and external groups are not inherently zero sum (Murphy, 1991b). In more complex, real-life interactions, the zero-sum approach is generally tempered with elements of strategic cooperation (Murphy, 1991a).

Games of Pure Cooperation. At the opposite end of the continuum from zero-sum games are games of pure cooperation. These are games with strictly identical interests (Harsanyi, 1977). There is no conflict between players; their sole objective is to coordinate their strategies in order to obtain a mutually preferred outcome (Coleman, 1982). Not unlike symmetric communication, however, game theorists are hard pressed to find real-life games of pure cooperation (Murphy, 1991a, 1991b). Games in which players' interests align so perfectly that there is no incentive to compete occur so infrequently as to be virtually irrelevant in a public relations context.

Mixed-Motive Games. In between pure conflict and pure cooperation is a broad third category of games called mixed-motive games. In such games, there are both cooperative and competitive elements: the interests of the players are complementary in some respects and opposed in others (Davis, 1970). Defining public relations as a mixed-motive game helps reconcile the apparent conflict between asymmetric (pure conflict) and symmetric (pure cooperation) models of public relations (Murphy, 1991b). Mixed-motive games describe behavior as most public relations practitioners experience it in the real world: as a sliding scale between cooperation and conflict in which organizational needs must be balanced against the needs of external groups without losing their primacy.

Game Theory Limitations

One limitation to a game theory approach to public relations is that there are often numerous equilibrium concepts and no compelling way to choose among them (Sebenius, 1992). This is particularly true with n-player games, which can possess several equilibrium points yielding different payoffs to different players (Baumol, 1965). In the absence of coordination of their plans, players may find it difficult to attain an equilibrium as each player aims for a different equilibrium point.

However, as soon as the number of players exceeds two, the possibility of communication and collusion between players is introduced (Luce & Raiffa, 1958). Several players may form a coalition in an effort to exploit the remaining players and obtain some mutually desired outcome. As the number of players in an n-player game gets larger, the number of possible coalitions greatly increases. Although the concepts of mixed strategies, zero-sum games, and equilibrium points can be extended to games with more than two players, the possibility of coalitions makes n-player theory different from two-player theory.

The lack of explicit provisions about communication and coalition formation in noncooperative n-player games is a major obstacle in developing a strategic approach to public relations based on game theory. Many types of coalition theories have been proposed (e.g., Harsanyi, 1977; Komorita et al., 1989); however, distinctions among such terms as bargaining, coalition formation, gaming, and negotiation are by no means commonly held among researchers (Nagao, Vollrath, & Davis, 1978). Nagao et al. allude to the continuing disagreement and confusion over mixed-motive interactions and the relationships among them.

Dimensions of Inter-Group Relations

In applying game theory to public relations, the question becomes one of identifying a conceptual framework and associated method for analyzing the relationships between organizations and external interest groups involved in potential conflicts. Organizational theory suggests that the following dimensions are relevant to inter-group relations.

Willingness to Negotiate. Shared interests, as implied by game theory, do not guarantee that an organization and external groups will cooperate in resolving conflicts. There must also be a willingness to meet with other parties to the conflict, discuss relevant interests, and attempt as a group to resolve the conflict.

Willingness to negotiate has been assigned a variety of conceptually similar meanings depending on the academic field of study or applied setting. In labor-management relations, the term refers narrowly to a willingness to negotiate contract concessions (Abboushi, 1987); in law, the term is used in reference to out-of-court settlements (Crowley, 1994). Willingness to negotiate is also a term used in business transactions (McKecknie, 1983), international diplomacy (Stein, 1989), and interpersonal dispute resolution (Donohue & Kolt, 1992).

More promising from a public relations perspective are meanings drawn from literature on conflict resolution. At some point in a protracted conflict or dispute, an event or change in conditions triggers a reassessment of alternatives and adds negotiation to the strategies of conflict management that are seriously considered by one or more parties to the conflict (Stein, 1989). This willingness to negotiate is communicated to the other parties, initiating a process of prenegotiation which culminates when the parties either agree to formal negotiations or abandon the consideration of negotiation as an option.

According to Sebenius (1992), players negotiate because they believe they can satisfy their interests better through some jointly decided action. Players assess their tradeoffs, evaluate alternatives to agreement, and compare them to the potential to do better through negotiated agreement. Other variables which may lead groups to consider negotiation include a perception that the distribution of power is moving toward equality (Zartman, 1989), a perception that the actions of the opposition are legitimate (Abboushi, 1987), a perception of the opponent as a party that is reasonable and trustworthy to some minimal degree (Fisher, 1989), and a belief that the other party will repay concessions with concessions (Zartman, 1989).

Most explications of the negotiation process begin with the assumption that parties are willing to negotiate, even if the parties do not expect the process to culminate in agreement (Brams & Doherty, 1993; Stein, 1989). However, willingness to negotiate may not be as normative as Grunig and Hunt (1984) imply in their definition of two-way symmetric communication. The demands of external groups often conflict (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), and sometimes these differences are irreconcilable. A strength of the mixed-motive model of public relations is that it preserves the central importance of an organization's own interests, yet acknowledges the power of opposing groups (Murphy, 1991b).

Power. An organization will not change its ideas, attitudes, and behaviors simply because external interest groups are there to be heard, as two-way symmetric communication implies (Murphy, 1991b). Rather, mixed-motive players will attempt to gain as much advantage as possible given their power and will only yield points proportional to the power of their opposition.

A definition of power that is commonly accepted in the field of negotiation and conflict resolution is the ability to influence others (Burkardt, Lamb, & Taylor, in press). Levinger (1959) defines power as an individual's potentiality for influencing one or more persons toward acting or changing in a given direction. Cartwright (1959a) extends this definition to groups, associating power with influences on the behavior of individuals or groups which arise from external sources. A group with high perceived power will have greater control over its own fate through its ability to influence others and will therefore have a greater likelihood of ensuring that conflicts will be resolved as it wishes (Cartwright, 1959b).

Legitimacy can be one basis of power. Legitimate power stems from internalized values or norms which dictate that party A has a legitimate right to influence party B and that B has an obligation to accept this influence (French & Raven, 1959). However, power can also stem from the internalization of values and norms other than a belief in the legitimacy of the source of authority. French and Raven identify reward power as power based on the ability to reward. Coercive power stems from the expectation on the part of B that it will be punished by A if it fails to conform to the influence attempt. Referent power is when B identifies with and has a desire to be closely associated with A. Expert power varies with the extent of the knowledge that B attributes to A within a given field of expertise. According to Weber (1968), power can contain an economic element in which obedience is caused by the economic superiority of others.

In contrast to definitions which assume that power is an attribute of a group, a second definition of power emphasizes dependence in social relationships. According to Emerson (1962), the ability of party A to influence the other party B resides in A's control over the resources B values; i.e., the power of A over B is based on dependency. The dependence of one party on another is a function of two variables: (1) the value B assigns to resources controlled by A; and (2) the availability of these resources from sources other than A.

Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) build on Emerson's work by applying power dependence concepts to inter-organizational relations. According to resource dependency theory, all organizations must engage in exchanges with the environment in order to acquire the resources needed for continued operation and survival. The need to acquire resources creates dependencies between an organization and external groups, providing the basis for external control over an organization.

Pfeffer and Salancik identify three factors which are critical in determining organizational interdependence: (1) the extent to which an organization or external group requires the resource for continued operation and survival; (2) the extent to which the organization or external group has discretion over allocation and use of the resource; and (3) the extent to which an organization can substitute alternate sources for the same resource. Resource importance, discretion over resource allocation and use, and concentration of resource control each have consequences for the ability of external interest groups to influence organizational ideas, attitudes, and behaviors.

Legitimacy. In contrast to political science tradition, which defines legitimacy in terms of power, a second school of thought views legitimacy as the product of cultural norms. In this context, Suchman (1995) defines legitimacy as "a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (p. 574).

Weber (1968) discerns three types of claims to legitimacy:

1. **Legal**. The sense of the legality of rules and the right of individuals in positions of authority established under such rules to issue commands.
2. **Traditional**. Respect for the sanctity of traditions and the status of those ruling under them.
3. **Charismatic**. The exceptional sanctity, heroism, or character of an individual and of the normative patterns of order ordained by him or her.

Drawing from sociology, social movements, and persuasion literature, Coombs (1992) lists 10 bases of legitimacy. To the three bases identified by Weber, Coombs adds values (both absolute values and social values), symbols (things that symbolize the legitimacy of something else), credibility (association with an individual who is knowledgeable and trustworthy), and entitlement (direct experience with a subject). Other strategies for gaining legitimacy include rationality (the use of empirical and logical evidence to persuade people), emotionality (the use of emotions to persuade people), and delegitimacy (bolstering one's legitimacy by attacking the legitimacy of the opposition).

Suchman (1995) identifies three primary forms of organizational legitimacy. The first form, pragmatic legitimacy, is based on the self-interested calculations of an organization's most immediate audiences. Types of pragmatic legitimacy include: (1) exchange legitimacy, based on the expected value of organizational policies; (2) influence legitimacy, based on organizational responsiveness to larger interests; and (3) dispositional legitimacy, based on belief in an organization's "good character."

The second form, moral legitimacy, is based on positive normative evaluation of the organization and its activities. Suchman identifies four types of moral legitimacy: (1) consequential legitimacy, based on an organization's accomplishments; (2) procedural legitimacy, based on socially accepted procedures; (3) structural legitimacy, based on socially accepted structural characteristics; and (4) personal legitimacy, based on the charisma of individual organizational leaders.

The third form of legitimacy identified by Suchman, cognitive legitimacy, is based on comprehensibility and "taken-for-grantedness." Comprehensibility stems from the predictability and plausibility of organizational actions, while taken-for-grantedness stems from the inevitability and permanence of organizational control.

Legitimacy is of special concern in the context of conflict in a democracy. Many players in a conflict may have no legally sanctioned power or authority. The ability of interest groups to shape outcomes depends on their ability to mobilize constituencies, which in turn depends on whether their leadership role is accepted by constituents. To the extent that a group and its activities are perceived as legitimate, the public tends to acknowledge the group's right to be heard on a particular issue (McLeod, personal communication, 1996).

Approaches to Understanding Inter-Group Relations

To understand the dimensions of inter-groups relations suggested by organizational theory, an approach suggested by coorientation theory is proposed.

Coorientation refers to the joint attempts of two or more parties to orient to each other and the common parts of their environment (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973). Although originally developed for interpersonal communication research, coorientation strategies have been used extensively at other levels of analysis (Jones, 1993). The measurement model of coorientation depicts the possible relationships between two or more parties (persons or groups) by measuring the following:

1. **Congruency**. The extent to which each party thinks the other party's idea or evaluation is similar to its own.
2. **Accuracy**. The extent to which one party's perception of the other party's idea or evaluation approximates the other party's actual idea or evaluation.
3. **Understanding**. The extent to which attributes of the idea or evaluation are shared between parties.
4. **Agreement**. The extent to which the actual ideas or evaluations are the same.

As McLeod and Chaffee point out, congruency is not a true interpersonal variable from the social system point-of-view. However, quantifying differences in accuracy and agreement provides a way of identifying discrepancies between actual and perceived shared interests, willingness to negotiate, power, and legitimacy. These perceptual discrepancies constitute potential obstacles to negotiation which can be addressed by appropriate communication strategies.

Proposed Method

For the proposed method, data were collected using purposively sampled personal interviews. First, a snowball sampling technique was used to identify the key groups involved in the conflict being studied. Each key group was then asked to identify up to three leaders to be interviewed for the study. [For sampling purposes, a leader was defined as "someone with formal authority or informal influence over group policy regarding the conflict being studied" (Lamb, personal communication, 1995).]

Measurement of Shared Interests

The first part of each interview consisted of five standardized, open-ended questions designed to identify potential equilibrium solutions to the conflict. To establish the context for the analysis, each participating leader was first asked to identify the core issues involved in the conflict. Next, each leader listed a range of possible solutions to the conflict, without regard to preference. From the list of possible solutions, each leader indicated the optimal and minimum outcomes that his or her group was willing to accept to resolve the conflict, as well as solutions which were unacceptable from the perspective of his or her group. To determine intensity of preference, each leader ranked solutions within each preference category (optimal, minimum, or unacceptable) according to their degree of acceptability.

The responses from all leaders across all groups were compared to develop a single list of possible solutions to the conflict. This list was then used to code the responses from each participating leader. The possible solutions on individual lists were assigned a numerical value based on how each leader ranked the acceptability of each solution. These values were summed to develop a prioritized list of preferred solutions for each group. Preferences were then compared across groups to identify potential equilibrium solutions to the conflict. The results were graphically depicted in Venn diagrams for each participating group, where overlapping preferences indicated potential negotiated solutions and nonoverlapping preferences indicated the potential for conflict. (See Figure 1.)

Measurement of Willingness to Negotiate, Power, and Legitimacy

The second part of each interview consisted of five questions designed to measure discrepancies between actual and perceived willingness to negotiate, power, and legitimacy. To illustrate, the first question asked leaders to rate each participating group in terms of that group's willingness to negotiate to resolve the conflict. Leaders responded using an 11-point scale, ranging from 0 (not at all willing) to 10 (extremely willing). Similar 11-point scales were used to measure power to influence the outcome, legitimacy as a representative of the public, and perceived agreement regarding the possible and preferred solutions identified in the first part of the interview.

Within this framework, each leader was first asked to rate his or her own group. Each leader then rated each of the other participating groups. Finally, each leader estimated how each of the other groups would rate his or her own group. The responses of the leaders representing each participating group were used to calculate mean actual and predicted ratings for each group. Using this information, the accuracy and agreement between ratings were quantified by calculating difference scores. The results were graphically depicted in graphs for each participating group, where distance from the line of accuracy or agreement indicated a perceptual obstacle to negotiation. (See Figure 2.)

Pretests

Two pretests of the proposed method were conducted. For the first pretest, the method was applied to a conflict over funding priorities within a federal government agency. This pretest was not ideally suited to identifying potential equilibrium solutions, as the intra-department conflict appeared to be diffuse and ongoing. Determination of minimax solutions requires the identification of specific optimal and minimum outcomes for each group and then seeking the areas of overlap.

To do this, the topic of conflict needs to be discrete, with clearly distinguishable outcomes resulting from various alternative resolutions of the conflict.

Based on the results of the first pretest, the interview protocol was revised and two questions were added to measure perceived agreement regarding optimal, minimum, and unacceptable solutions. A second, limited pretest was conducted by applying the method to a municipal conflict over the offering of tax incentives to encourage a major corporation to build a new plant within city limits. Refinements in question wording, the addition of detailed definitions and instructions, and the distribution of hardcopies of rating scales to interviewees appeared to address other minor methodological difficulties encountered in the first pretest.

Case Study: Sand Flats Recreation Area

For this study, the proposed method was applied to the conflict over recreation use impacts at the Sand Flats Recreation Area near Moab, Utah.

Since the mid-1980s, Sand Flats had become a mecca for mountain bikers, off-road vehicle (ORV) users, and students on spring break (Hedden, 1994). The huge influx of visitors had damaged fragile semi-desert habitats and overwhelmed the ability of caretakers and the local community to provide services. In developing a management plan for Sand Flats, conflict arose between those groups interested in protecting Sand Flats habitats, those demanding continued recreational access, and those interested in a sustainable economy.

Participants

The snowball sampling technique identified seven key groups involved in the recreation management conflict: the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which had jurisdictional control over Sand Flats; the Grand County Council, which managed Sand Flats in collaboration with BLM; the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA), a nonprofit wilderness advocacy organization; the

Western Association of Land Users (WALU), a nonprofit multiple-use advocacy organization; Red Rock 4-Wheelers, Inc., a nonprofit four-wheel-drive club; Rim Cyclery, a commercial mountain bike shop; and the Canyon Country Zephyr, an alternative newspaper serving the Moab area. Key groups identified from one to six leaders to be interviewed for the study.

Procedure

Interviews were conducted by the author and lasted an average of 1 hour and 15 minutes. Each leader identified optimal, minimum, and unacceptable solutions to the conflict and rated each participating group in terms of its willingness to negotiate, power, and legitimacy. Responses were compared to determine potential equilibrium solutions to the Sand Flats conflict and identify potential obstacles to negotiation between participating groups.

Results

Forty-nine solutions, or components of a possible solution, were identified, and prioritized lists of preferred solutions to the conflict were obtained for each participating group. Analysis of overlapping preferences (see Figure 1) indicated widespread support for the current management approach at Sand Flats. Component of the current approach - such as joint federal-county management responsibility, development of camping areas, increased caretaker presence, and fee collection - were viewed favorably by most groups. The preferred option was to have Grand County take over management of Sand Flats in the event that federal funding was cut. Groups also supported a land exchange to consolidate BLM land holdings at the recreation area. The need to increase funding for services and infrastructure was widely acknowledged, as was the need to educate visitors about fragile Sand Flats habitats.

The method was able to identify the potential for conflict between groups over specific management alternatives. Solutions which involved designating Sand Flats a sacrifice area, restricting Sand Flats to day use only, or dispersing use to surrounding areas were considered optimal by some groups and unacceptable by others. Development of camping areas, viewed favorably by most groups, was considered unacceptable by the Canyon Country Zephyr. Having BLM resume daily management of Sand Flats also proved to be a controversial alternative.

Not surprisingly, BLM and the Grand County Council were viewed as powerful groups, although the legitimacy ratings for the federal agency were unexpectedly low. (See Figure 2.) Both SUWA and WALU rated themselves much higher on the three dimensions than did other participating groups; the same was true to a lesser extent for Red Rock 4-Wheelers and the Canyon Country Zephyr. Rim Cyclery appeared to have the most accurate perception of the way it was viewed by other groups.

Discrepancies between actual and perceived willingness to negotiate, along with anecdotal evidence, were used to identify the negotiation strategy typically preferred by each group. While BLM and Red Rock 4-Wheelers tended to adopt cooperative strategies, SUWA, WALU, and Rim Cyclery were more likely to select zero-sum approaches. The strategy adopted by the Canyon Country Zephyr depended on the issue, while internal divisions affected strategy selection by the Grand County Council. On Sand Flats, however, willingness to negotiate was generally high. This willingness to negotiate needed to be communicated to other key players, particularly by those groups who were perceived as being noncooperative. Specific communication strategies were suggested for each participating group, based on insights gained from the analysis. (See Table 1.)

Discussion

In the analysis, perceptions of issues, solutions, and key players were compared across the seven groups participating in the Sand Flats study. The first objective of the analysis was to identify potential equilibrium solutions to the conflict. The second objective was to identify discrepancies in perceptions of willingness to negotiate, power, and legitimacy which might constitute obstacles to negotiation between participating groups.

In both instances, the proposed method generally worked as intended. In addition to suggesting a range of negotiable alternatives for resolving the conflict, overlapping circles in Venn diagrams also provided insights into possible coalitions which might form in support of or opposition to particular management alternatives. (See Figure 1.) Such findings have implications not only for the development of public relations strategies but for management decision-making as well. Given a number of possible solutions which are equally acceptable to a focal organization, the organization can lay the foundation for consensus by developing management plans around those alternatives which are preferred by the organization's most immediate publics. Communication strategies can then be devised to address the perceptual discrepancies which might keep some groups away from the negotiation table.

Methodological Implications

Sampling Procedure. In general, the seven groups selected for inclusion in the study appeared to be representative of the range of interests and philosophies regarding Sand Flats management. Sample representativeness was checked by including a question at the end of interviews, asking participating leaders if there were other organized groups which they considered to be seriously interested in recreational use at Sand Flats. Responses suggested the need to consider the inclusion of individuals in future studies. As noted by Stephenson (1978), however, interpersonal problem-solving processes do not map perfectly onto inter-group conflicts. The lack of anonymity would also increase the risk of bias from socially desirable responses. Distinctions between dimensions of interpersonal and inter-group relations need to be investigated before modifying the proposed method to include both individuals and groups.

Measuring Shared Interests. The varying level of detail used to describe possible solutions to the conflict made coding and comparison somewhat difficult. To improve reliability, it may be preferable to have leaders identify optimal, minimum, and unacceptable solutions using a preestablished list, with the option of adding solutions that do not appear on the list. To develop a comprehensive list of possible solutions, a question could be added to the sampling protocol and a list prepared from the responses of individuals contacted during the sampling process.

Although agreement within groups regarding optimal and unacceptable solutions to the Sand Flats conflict tended to be high, there were instances where leaders' preferences disagreed. Some BLM participants viewed the sale of state lands at Sand Flats to private developers as an acceptable alternative, for example, while other BLM participants considered it unacceptable. Such findings suggest that strategy selection in negotiations may be affected by other, ongoing games with internal (or external) publics. For the purpose of the analysis, no attempt was made to resolve internal discrepancies; however, future research needs to consider the effect of intra-group conflict on choice of strategy in inter-group negotiations.

Measuring Willingness to Negotiate, Power, and Legitimacy. The method used to measure and compare perceptions of willingness to negotiate, power, and legitimacy generally worked as intended. Determination of what constituted a substantial discrepancy was arbitrary, however, and needs further investigation. Other methodological issues include the assignment of ambiguous ratings (i.e., intentionally circling nonadjacent numbers on an 11-point scale) and how to handle missing ratings. In the latter instance, the use of mean ratings obscured the fact that there was a systematic pattern of missing ratings for certain groups, suggesting that these groups were less closely associated with the conflict under study.

Application. The recreation use conflict at Sand Flats was not ideally suited for testing the proposed method. Through the AmeriCorps Program, BLM and the Grand County Council were in the process of implementing a partial solution to the conflict. Related issues, such as the conflict between grazing and recreational uses of Sand Flats, were in the process of being resolved. The proposed method may have greater value when applied to an emerging issue, suggesting new and innovative alternatives for managing the issue and allowing the focal organization to proactively devise communication strategies which defuse the potential for conflict.

Theoretical Implications

Coorientation Theory. The proposed method extends the measurement model of coorientation to situations where both A and B are collective entities. While aggregate measures may be appropriate for use in situations where there is little direct contact between groups, however, McLeod and Chaffee (1973) caution that the reification of groups may break down when individual members of opposing groups communicate directly with each other.

The communication of information requires that the interacting groups be capable of simultaneous orientation toward the object or issue "X" which serves as the focus of communication (McLeod & Chaffee, 1973). Newcomb (1953) assumes that A and B coorient as a symmetrical pair, equal in terms of the factors which affect the ability of groups to coorient. According to McLeod and Chaffee, however, symmetrical pairs are rarely encountered in real-world situations.

The proposed method extends the explanatory power of coorientation theory by defining X in terms of dimensions which affect the degree and type of coorientation between groups. This extension of the conceptual model of coorientation is illustrated in Figure 3. The complex network of relationships in n-player games makes the analysis of simultaneous coorientation difficult; thus, the method applies dimensions of inter-group relations, one relation at a time, to assess the degree and type of coorientation between groups. Further research is needed before a satisfactory theory of communication and coorientation in n-player games can be proposed.

Organizational Theory. The conceptual framework, as currently proposed, does not specify relationships between the dimensions of inter-group relations suggested by organizational theory. In the course of conducting the field study, however, willingness to negotiate emerged as a key dependent variable in conflict situations. Variables which appear to influence willingness to negotiate include those considered in the study (shared interests, power, and legitimacy); however, the factors affecting willingness to negotiate are potentially numerous. By identifying and empirically investigating the relationships between willingness to negotiate and important antecedent variables, it should be possible to determine with greater precision where groups fall on the continuum between conflict and cooperation.

Game Theory. Integrating the coorientational aspects of understanding into game theory and the identification of minimax solutions offers another promising direction for future research. The attributes used to define possible solutions, the degree to which groups share a common understanding of these attributes, and the evaluation each group assigns to these attributes may influence the acceptability of possible solutions as negotiable alternatives for resolving a conflict. Defining possible solutions in terms of commonly held attributes thus becomes important in getting groups to the negotiation table.

Conclusion

Part I of the proposed method measures shared interests using an approach suggested by game theory. With this information, the public relations practitioner will be able to determine the likelihood that an organization and external interest groups will be able to work toward an equilibrium solution to a conflict. An equilibrium solution, such as the maximum-minimax pair, means that no group will be able to do better given the other groups' choices. Groups thus have a positive motive for working together toward a negotiated solution that allows the organization and external interest groups to coexist.

Shared interests do not guarantee that a group will cooperate in resolving a conflict. Part II of the proposed method uses an approach borrowed from coorientation theory to measure actual and perceived willingness to negotiate, power, and legitimacy. With this information, the public relations practitioner will be able to identify the groups which are likely to be willing to negotiate in conflict situations, identify perceptual discrepancies which might keep groups away from the negotiation table, and devise communication strategies for addressing these discrepancies. If groups are unwilling to participate, a zero-sum or asymmetric strategy may be required to isolate the group from potential support.

The proposed method, grounded in several complementary theoretical perspectives, seems to promise significant utility in helping public relations practitioners identify barriers to productive negotiations between an organization and external interest groups involved in a conflict. In doing so, it appears to provide a basis for devising communication strategies to encourage participation by those groups willing to negotiate and identify groups for which zero-sum or asymmetric approaches may be necessary.

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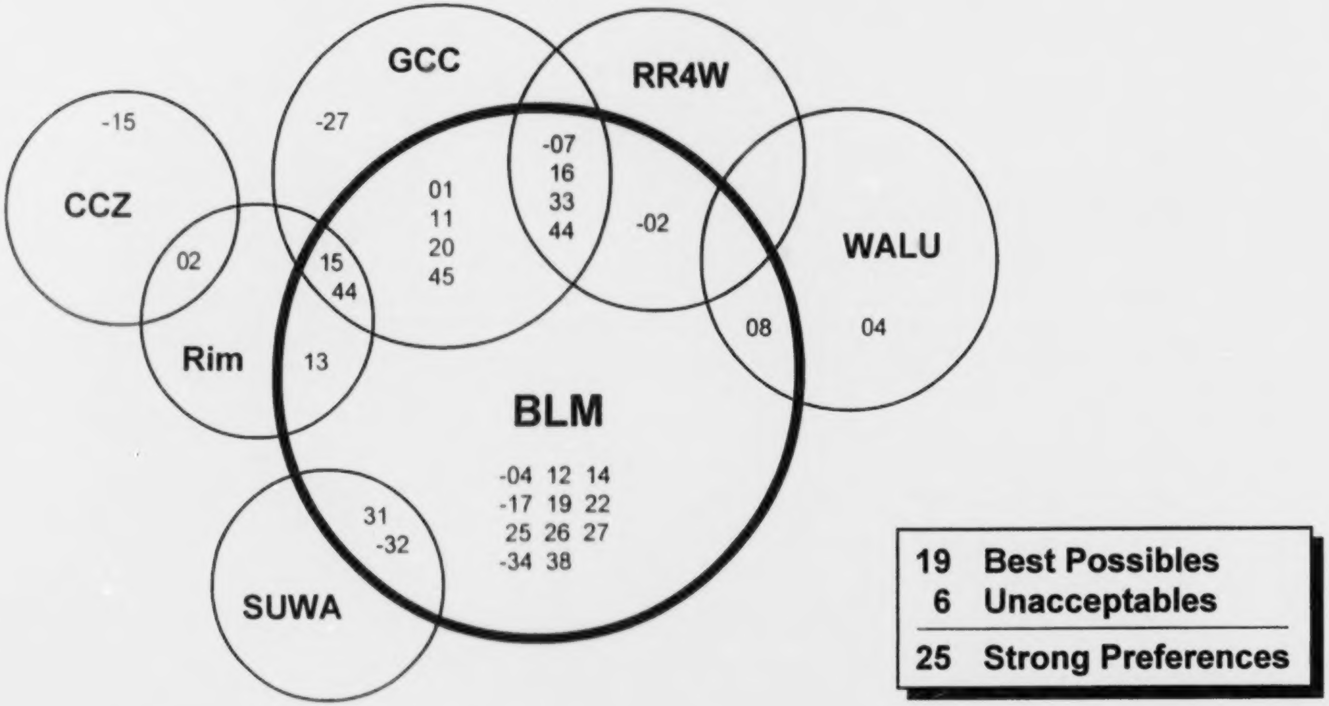
Table 1. Possible Communication Strategies for Groups Participating in the Sand Flats Study.

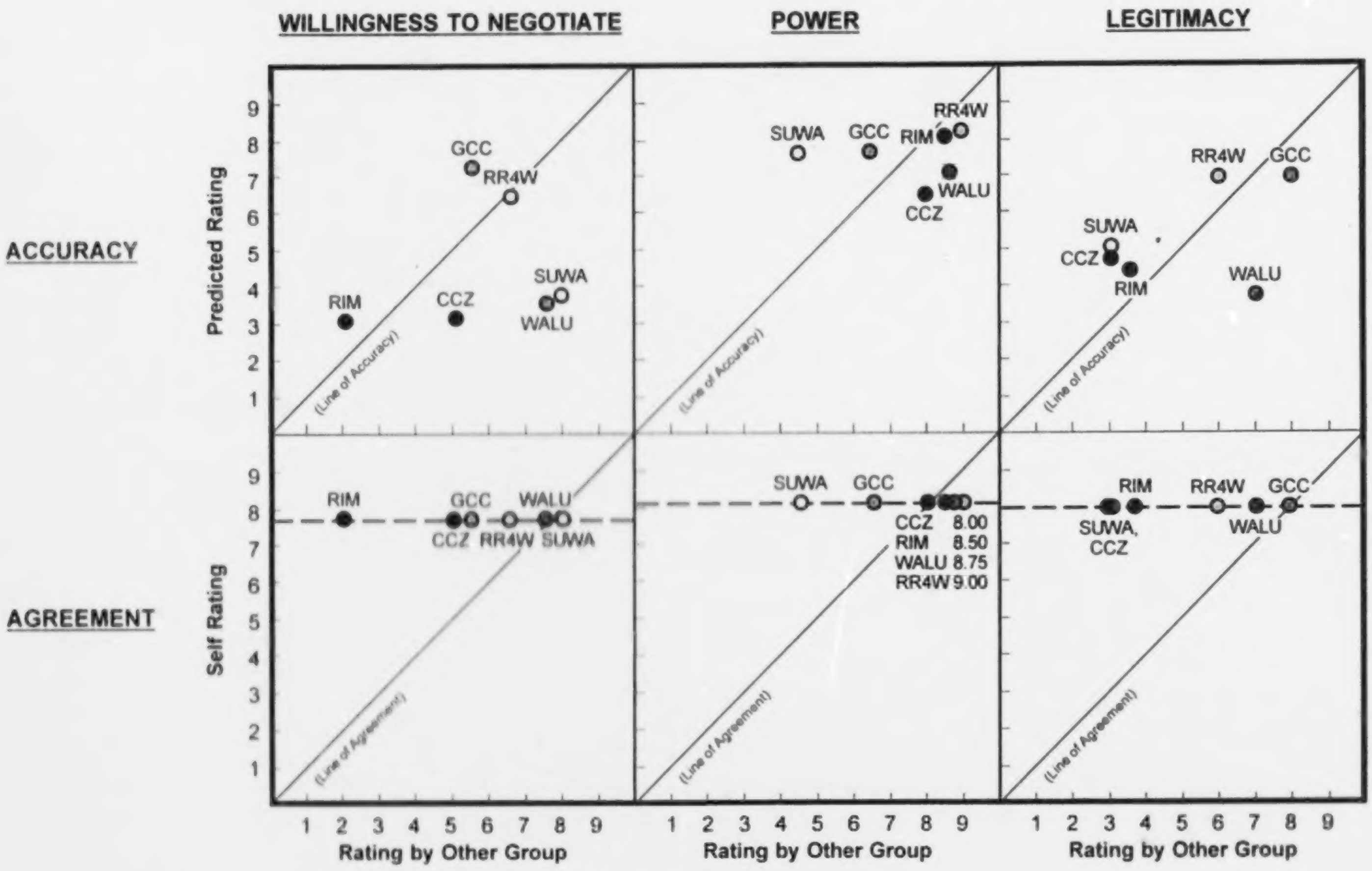
Group	Preferred Negotiation Strategy	Possible Communication Strategies
BLM	Cooperative	Repair legitimacy by maximizing face-to-face contacts with diverse community groups; maintain good working relationships with local media.
SUWA	Zero-sum	Maintain power base at a national level by lobbying elected officials and forming alliances with major environmental organizations.
Red Rock 4-Wheelers	Cooperative	Maintain two-way communications with BLM and the Council; generate positive publicity for multiple recreation uses of Sand Flats through appropriate media strategies.
Grand County Council	Mixed-motive	Increase power by addressing barriers to communication and cooperation between competing factions on the Council.
WALU	Zero-sum	Mobilize grassroots support for multiple uses of Sand Flats through community interpersonal activities.
Rim Cyclery	Zero-sum	Build support for "no management" alternative among regional and national mountain bike organizations.
Canyon Country	Mixed-motive	Increase power by adopting asymmetric strategies on the issues it wishes to influence.

Figure 1. Bureau of Land Management: Agreement with Other Groups Regarding Preferred Solutions*


GCC
RR4W
-15
-27
CCZ
-07
16
33
44
01
11
20
45
-02
WALU
02
15
44
08
04
Rim
13
BLM
-04 12 14
-17 19 22
25 26 27
-34 38
31
-32
SUWA
19 Best Possibles
6 Unacceptables
25 Strong Preferences

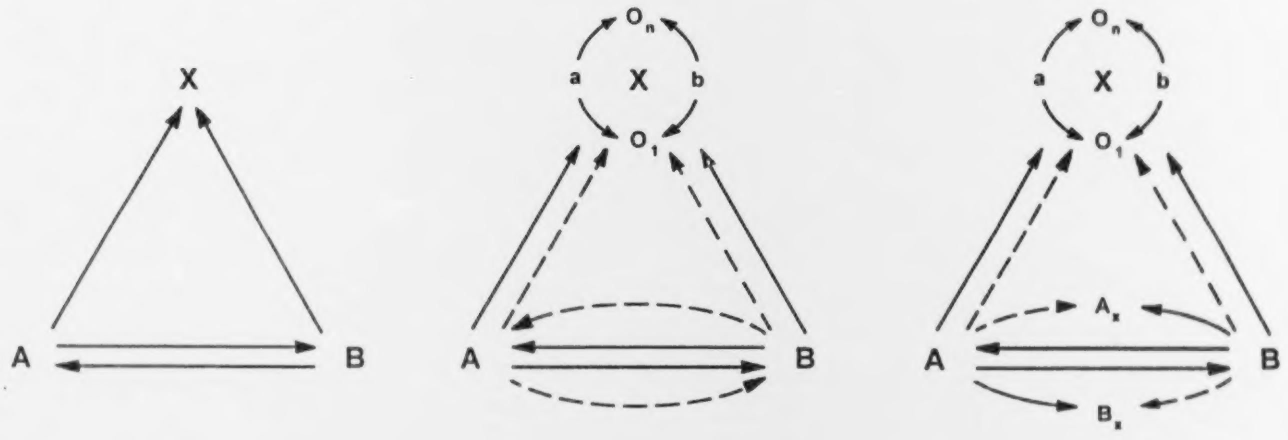
* Solution numbers in Venn diagrams refer to numbered descriptions of the 49 possible solutions identified in the Sand Flats study. A minus sign indicates that the solution was considered unacceptable; no minus sign indicates that the solution was considered optimal. In this diagram, preferences are compared only for those solutions which were considered optimal or unacceptable by the group highlighted by the dark circle, BLM. Numbers within the highlighted circle represent potential negotiated solutions; numbers outside the highlighted circle represent potential conflicts. [For numbered descriptions and Venn diagrams for other participating groups, see Christen (1996).]

Figure 2. Bureau of Land Management: Comparison of Ratings for Willingness to Negotiate, Power, and Legitimacy**



** For graphs of ratings comparisons for other participating groups, see Christen (1996).

Figure 3. Extension of the Conceptual Model of Coorientation***



The Minimal A-B-X System
(Newcomb, 1953)

The Conceptual Model of
Coorientation
(McLeod & Chaffee, 1973)

The Proposed Model

*** Solid lines indicate a group's own evaluation of the dimensions Ax and Bx (defined as the shared interests, willingness to negotiate, power, and legitimacy of each group. Dotted lines indicate one group's perceptions of the other group's evaluation of the same dimensions.

445

44